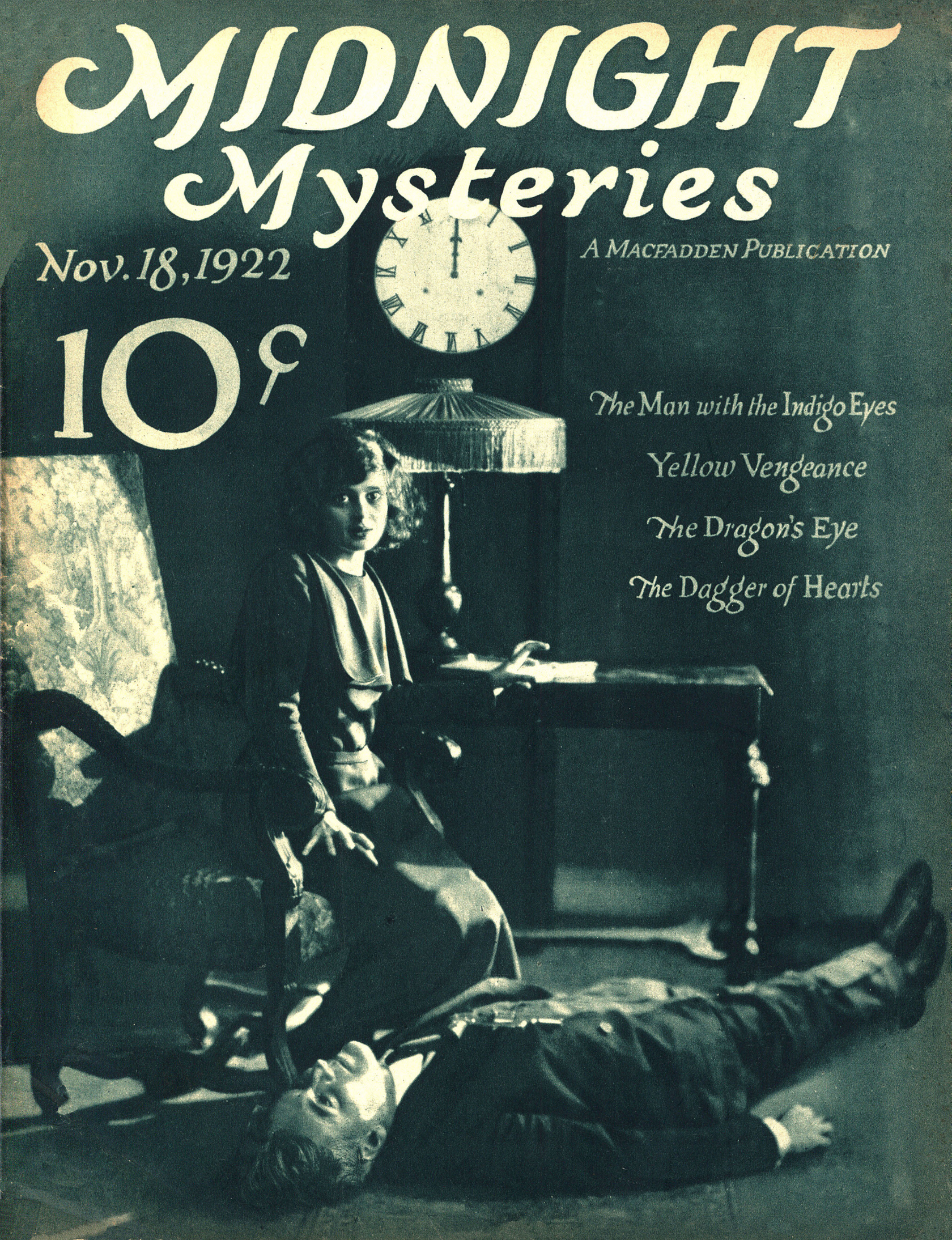
MIDNIGHT Mysteries

A MACFADDEN PUBLICATION

Nov. 18, 1922

10¢



The Man with the Indigo Eyes

Yellow Vengeance

The Dragon's Eye

The Dagger of Hearts

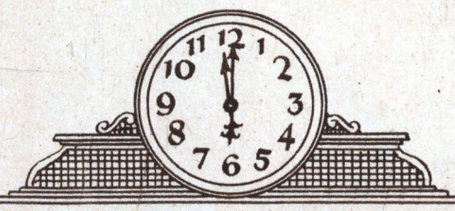
A New Blossoming

YOU hold in your hands the fruit of your desire, the blossoming of the expressed wishes of our readers. Every mail has brought us requests for mystery stories—for stories of the strange and inexplicable, the bizarre and the outre! We have yielded to the call; for after all, it is the business of the editors to give the readers of a magazine what they want.

In going into the vast field of fiction we have set a standard for ourselves, a standard so high that only the best in every respect can pass. We have gathered together neither authors' names nor inflated reputations—our sole care has been to gather real mystery and detective stories, the very best obtainable. Our only test is this: Is it a good story? Is it a story that will hold our readers from beginning to end?

We believe we have succeeded in our aim—that we have collected the most mysterious, the most thrilling and the most interesting stories that a magazine was ever fortunate enough to present to its readers.

We believe that this issue of the magazine will confirm us in this, in your judgment. And when we say that, we are fully aware of the fact that, in the last analysis, your judgment is the only judgment that can mean anything to us.



Volume I **MIDNIGHT** Number 14

COVER—Picture posed by Miss Shirley Poynter

The House of Whispering Shadows. By Samri Frikell - - - - 3

The Man With The Indigo Eyes. By Robin Stage - - - - 4 and 5

Yellow Vengeance. By Allan Haggard - - - - - - - - - 7

Her Father's Blood. By P. L. Atkinson - - - - - - - - - 9

He Fell in Love with a Ghost. By Fulton Oursler - - - - - - 11

The Dragon's Eye. By John R. Coryell - - - - - - 12 and 13

Dead Men's Diamonds. By Lyon Mearson - - - - - - - - 15

Without a Soul. By Svengali - - - - - - - - - - 16 and 17

The Dagger of Hearts. By T. Howard Kelly - - - - - - - 21

The Heart of a Tinpanner. By W. Carey Wonderly - - - - 23

The Red Horror. By Blance Goodman - - - - - - - - - 25

Ask Madame Pythagoras - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 26

Published weekly by the MIDNIGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 119 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y., and 166 North Michigan Boulevard, Chicago, Ill. Edwin E. Zoty, President, Percy Atkinson, Secretary. Entered as second class matter August 4th, 1922, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription $5.00 a year. In Canada—single copy, 15 cents.

Next Week

"The Poison Cup" by Allan Haggard

"Outside the Verdict" by D R. Lane

"Shanghaied" by Paul Hervey Fox

Next Week

"The Missing Button" by Addison Lewis

"The Last Warning" by Svengali

True Ghost Stories

NOVEMBER
Eighteenth
1922

MIDNIGHT
113-119 W. 40th Street, New York City

VOLUME 1
NUMBER 14

The House of Whispering Shadows

By SAMRI FRIKELL

THE room was utterly without sound or light. The double horror of darkness and silence brooded like two vast unwinking eyes upon the blood-wet floor; upon the crumpled form of a dead man; upon the girl alive and terrified, locked in the room with the blood and the body and the darkness and the silence.

She had been there for hours. They were hours of torture—the torture of indecision. For she knew that in the dead man's pocket was the key to the locked door. But she didn't have the courage to creep over the soaking rug, put her hands in the dead man's pocket and take the key. It was too horrid a price to pay for liberty! And so she had been there for hours in the black horrible quiet.

He had lured her to his empty house with lies. It had been a lie when he told her there was work they must finish in his library. It had been a lie when he said his wife and children were at home.

There was no work to be done. His wife and children were in the country.

He had wanted her. Alone with her in his house he had locked the library door upon them. He had soiled her face with his pawing hands; seared her lips with the hot breath of his desire, laughed at her terror and tears. That laugh had set her flaming with wild revolt. Against his evil intent she had fought him around the locked room, shrieking and clutching, scratching and kicking and then——

The girl shivered in the blood-soaked darkness and silence.

With superhuman force, she had pushed him away from her. Reeling and stumbling, he had tottered backward, a threatening laugh falling from his lips. He had tripped backward, he had fallen; his head striking the edge of the table. She had heard the splitting of the bone in his head.

She had watched him go out. She had watched him grow still by slow degrees, with groans and gasps and curses.

As the late twilight trembled into shadowy dusk and dusk into obliterating night, she had crouched in a far corner paralyzed with dread. And after a long while it seemed to her that the gaunt shadows whispered—a softly sibilant whisper, a ghostly requiem over the still form on the floor. The room was haunted with shadows and with whispers.

The horror made her scream—shrilly, frenziedly. But there was no answer to her wailing shriek except the voiceless, strange, unbidden whisper.

What were those whispers?

She could bear it no longer. Cold, with a deep and very terrible cold, she came to a decision at last. She must bear the lesser horror to escape the greater. She must get out—out—of this grisly chamber of death, before reason failed her and before she sank, mad or dead, in the pool of his evil blood.

Over the damp carpet she crept and knelt beside the dead man. Her icy hand fumbled in his pocket. Keys and matches! Keys and matches! Her mind seemed full of the words, muttered and whispered—though the ghostly whispers had suddenly seemed to cease.

She struck a match. For one dreadful moment her eyes gazed upon the still thing at her feet. Then, in the wavering light, she saw the candles on the bookcase. Dizzily she rushed forward and seized a waxen taper. Three matches were in her hand. Two sputtered and died—but the last ignited the wick!

She was almost mad with fear. With the candle adding shadows to the room, new whispers, taunting whispers, eager whispers seemed to come. The key rattled in the lock. But at last—at last the door was flung open and the dark staircase loomed invitingly beneath her.

Down it she plunged. The front door was but a few feet away from her trembling hands. She would rush out into the night,—away from the darkness and the silence and the blood and the still form and the shadows that came and went and whispered. But suddenly——

Very suddenly she heard the whisper again. What was it? Her reason was crumpling under the strain. Piteously she turned, looking over her shoulder up the staircase and there—there on the wall, with outstretched, clutching hands, reared a great gaunt shadow, coming after her.

"Sylvia! Sylvia! Sylvia!"

Her own name, whispered, whispered down the staircase as the shadow hands moved nearer, nearer, nearer. She shrank back terrified—to behold him swaying at the head of the stairs. Blood was on his face and on his hands! Yet he grinned!

"Sylvia," he cried. "Off and on for the last half hour I have been calling to you, but my voice was too weak. I am not badly hurt. I should have been killed. Go home and thank your God that you were saved and try to forget I ever lived."

She fled out into the night.

The Man With the

By

The door of the cab was suddenly flung open and a snarling voice said: "Antonio Blitz, Antonio Blitz I'm going to scare you into fits"

IT is my desire to set my good friend, Dr. Antonio Blitz, right before the world.

I have no authority in such an undertaking. As a matter of fact, I shall not do Dr. Blitz the ordinary courtesy of letting him read these manuscripts. Indeed, I have not informed him of my intention to broadcast to the world a selection of his extraordinary adventures.

The truth is that I parted in anger from Dr. Blitz. I have called myself his friend and I insist that I have proved that friendship in times of danger as well as peace.

Did I not involve my personal reputation as a good Republican and a member of the Rotary Club during the atrocious affair of the old woman with the double nose? Did I not risk my very life to regain two pages of the doctor's notebook after the giant black man from the Sudan had chewed off the ropes with which we had bound his wrists? And what of the $50,000 which I advanced Dr. Blitz without security during his investigation of the poisoned twins of Dobb's Ferry?

I recall these acts of friendship with reluctance. I would not refer to them in any manner if I didn't know that the red-lipped, brown-eyed Estelle will read these papers aloud to Dr. Blitz, when they are published. In view of all that has happened, I wish to remind the Doctor of things he might be glad to forget.

To me his attitude after our years of intimacy is nothing but sheer impudence. Why should he throw me out of his house at midnight because I preferred a red-haired wife to a blonde?

But that, of course, is getting far ahead of my story.

I met Dr. Blitz while I was on the staff of the old *New York Sun* before it passed into the hands of Mr. Munsey. At that time, Miss Ada Patterson was laying the foundation of her brilliant literary reputation. It was Ada who gave Dr. Blitz the nickname of "The man with the indigo eyes." She called him that one day in an interview written after she had seen Dr. Blitz summon forth two spirits from the dead. The name clung to him.

At first he pretended to be annoyed—though secretly, I am sure, he was always pleased. He was, and is a vain man. The grotesque appellation delighted his thirst for the bizarre. After a while he became proud of the title and was disappointed if the newspapers didn't use it.

As a matter of fact he did have indigo eyes—at times. His eyes possessed that clairvoyant luster,

Mysterious happenings, unexplained by anything in human experience or earthly knowledge—thrills and surprises on every page—a gripping, tense plot that will hold you from the first line to the last and a denouement that is as startling as it is surprising — that is what this versatile writer has worked into the chronicles of Antonio Blitz, "The Man With the Indigo Eyes"

A fleeting touch of tenderness crossed her face as I left her. Or did I imagine it?

Indigo Eyes

ROBIN STAGE

The strange, the bizarrre, the outre---all are in this yarn, from the pen of a master of mystery fiction.

You will be thrilled!

"He stared at me for one wild second, then stumbled to his feet to look at himself in the glass, there to behold for himself the appaling mystery which had almost blinded me with bewilderment"

those wierdly shifting lights one associates usually with a cat. The iris was large, with an indefinite almandine tinge—a watershly reddish purple which, however, in moments of excitement, altered to the most intense indigo.

But surely, you remember this extraordinary creature. He was the founder of the New York Society for Psychic Research. For his interest in spiritualism, he was expelled from a professorship in one of our leading universities. For twenty-five years he was almost constantly in the limelight, involved in an endless pursuit of phantoms, a ceaseless quest for shadows.

Then suddenly about a year ago he disappeared. He resigned. More, he vanished—and with him went a woman with raven hair, a red-haired woman and a blonde.

Of all that, I shall have much to say in its own proper place.

But for the moment, I shall confine myself to the story of my first adventure with Dr. Blitz.

At that time I had just resigned from the *Sun*—where I was never a brilliant success—and, fortified by four years experience in the Criminal Courts Building, I founded the detective firm of which I am still the head and which, I may add, is still bringing criminals to justice when the police fall down—in spite of my recent disagreement with Dr. Blitz.

I REMEMBER that I was poring over some typewritten evidence collected by one of my assistants in the matter of the abominable Mrs. Peachtree, the fat old woman with the goiter in her neck who was charged with having boiled her nephew alive. It was a case which interested me exceedingly. I was most interested in trying to find the weak link in the perfect alibi the old hag had contrived. Consequently, I was annoyed when my secretary appeared at the door and said:

"A very excited gentleman wants to see you, Mr. Greer."

"Well, who is he?" I demanded frowning.

"It is I," said a squeaky voice behind her. Dr. Blitz never could eradicate the squeak from his voice.

He was standing there in the doorway trembling excitedly, his short figure quivering, his large hairy hands clasped together in front of him, his eyes turned a terrible indigo.

"I must see you at once and alone, Mr. Greer," he said, "upon a matter of the gravest importance."

I sent the girl out to her lunch and offered the doctor a seat and a cigar. I observed that his fingers twitched as he fumbled with the matches.

"My dear Mr. Greer," he said, "I have come to you because Miss Ada Patterson tells me you are the most promising young private detective in the city of New York. I have a mystery that must be solved at once. These things can't be allowed to go on, Mr. Greer. No one knows what will happen next. These things must be stopped!"

"What things?" I asked, reluctantly shoving aside the evidence of the old female cannibal.

"Damnable things!" cried the doctor. "Witchcraft! The curse of the tangled foot, the spell of the evil eye! Terrible things, Mr. Greer."

I wondered if the Doctor's long investigations into the occult had turned his brain. Yet, though his manner was excited, he seemed perfectly sane.

"Tell me what is on your mind," I said serenely.

"I have had a most terrible experience," he began, "but I want you to believe every word I tell you. It is the truth as there is a living God. I will tell it to you from the beginning.

"You must understand that I have a very beautiful secretary. Her name is Estelle Jackson. I don't wish you to get the idea that I am in love with Miss Jackson or that Miss Jackson is in love with me. I am a bachelor and I shall remain a bachelor until I die. Women, as women, do not interest me. But Miss Jackson has not only a beautiful face; she has a sympathetic mind. Without her I could never go on with my work and sometimes in a perfectly innocent fashion, we spend our evenings together.

"One night two weeks ago she accompanied me to a meeting of the Board of Directors of our Society. Some very important business matters had to be decided. Recently the Society had a bequest of $200,000 left by an old millionaire who was interested in our work. This, and the plans for the forthcoming year were discussed, not altogether pleasantly, as there are two factions in the Society.

"Finally it was decided that all these matters should be deferred until the annual election which comes up next month. If I am re-elected, as I confidently expect to be, I shall end this dissension in our ranks. However, I am gabbling on about non-essential matters.

"It happens that Miss Jackson lives with her family in an apartment house on Morningside Heights and as it is a very short distance, we decided to walk to her home together. I said good-night to her in the lobby of the apartment house and then walked down Morningside Heights toward Cathedral Parkway, where I intended to board one of the buses and ride to my own lodgings on West 12th Street. A fleeting touch of tenderness crossed her face as I left her. Or did I imagine it? My God, I'd like to know.

"The long avenue was deserted except for one automobile which rounded the curb of the plateau from Broadway and moved very slowly and silently southward. I paid no particular attention to the automobile. My thoughts were engrossed with the arguments and dissension at our meeting, but suddenly I became aware that the automobile had drawn in close to the curb and was proceeding very slowly as if the occupants in the darkened interior were watching me.

"The suspicion occurred to me that perhaps I was going to be held up—as you know the crime wave that now prevails. As I started to walk away faster the door of the cab was suddenly flung open and a snarling voice said:

"'*Antonio Blitz, Antonio Blitz*
I'm going to scare you into fits.'

"THE absurdity of the thing startled me and I turned in amazement. Mr. Greer, in all my life I have never seen such a thing as peered out at me from the darkness of that automobile. It was the face of an old woman with her hands held up in front of her as if she would spring upon me. Her face was very long and thin and bony and her neck sagged in ugly yellow folds of flesh. Her form was enveloped in a green cloak and in her stringy gray hair there glittered a large diamond star.

"I was too dumb-founded to reply. I stood there merely looking at her and wondering what would happen next. She leered at me with the most wicked smile human lips have ever formed. Then, drawing back her mouth to disclose two rows of rotting teeth, she chattered:

"'*You're a knave, you're a slave*
With your right foot in the grave.'

Then she put her hands together and hissed at me: 'Beware the spell of the broken thumb!

"As I gasped in amazement she put her thumb to her nose and wiggled her fingers. The door of the cab slammed shut, as if flung by unseen hands and the car raced off into the night.

"An adventure with a lunatic," was my amused comment.

"No, no, you have not heard," said Dr. Blitz solemnly. "Look at this."

He held up the thumb of his right hand thickly bandaged.

"I broke my thumb the very next morning in a fall downstairs," he said solemnly.

I laughed. Was it possible that this distinguished savant actually believed there was any connection between this ludicrous incident with the old woman in the cab and the fact that he broke his thumb? It was too preposterous. I told him that he should not be so unstrung even though the coincidence was in a sense extraordinary.

"You are a damn fool," he replied. "Wait until I tell you the rest of it!"

"Go ahead," I urged him.

"Well, I thought as you think—that the whole thing was simply a peculiar coincidence. But Mr. Greer, three nights later I had occasion to cross through Washington Square to visit a certain medium living on West 4th Street. As I was crossing 4th Street I suddenly discovered an automobile bearing down upon me. I recognized it instantly. It was the automobile in which I had seen the old hag.

"Transfixed with a mixture of curiosity and perhaps a bit of superstitious fear, I stood waiting. The automobile came to a jerking halt. Again the door was flung open and again the old hag peered out. She grinned at me as before and then in her senile giggle she said,

"'*You doubted me, you were so dumb,*
But take a look at your bandaged thumb.'

"Then, as I made no reply, she leaned forward and in a cackling kind of squeal cried out,

"'*I will give you a laugh, I will give you a sneer,*
I will give you a pain in your big left ear.'"

Dr. Blitz stared at me for the moment in haggard silence.

"Mr. Greer," he said solemnly, "I saw that old woman shrink back into the darkness of the cab. Again I saw the door pulled shut as by an invisible hand and I saw that car whirl away——"

"And what?" I interposed irritably.

"I was suddenly attacked with the most violent pain in my left ear, a pain of such poignant anguish that before the night was over I had to go to the hospital and accept the use of opiates to deaden the pain—and worse than all, the doctors have not yet discovered what was the matter with my ear."

I LOOKED at Dr. Blitz incredulously. This was stretching coincidence a bit too far. I decided that unless the man was a lunatic he was lying to me for some peculiarly venomous purpose of his own, and what that purpose could be I couldn't even imagine.

"Well, did anything else happen?" I asked him evenly.

He gave me a rancid look.

"You have heard only the preliminaries," was his startling announcement. "Two nights ago I had gone to the Rivoli to see a motion picture. I was walking down Broadway and turned east on 43rd Street to walk over toward Fifth Avenue to get on a bus. As I passed a little millinery shop there I noticed a figure crouching in the corner. My attention was attracted because I though I detected a motion toward me as if to attract my attention.

"Conceive my astonishment when I saw that it was my enemy the old hag. As she saw me she put her hand on the knob of the door behind her and retreated until only her face was peering out behind the door. Again she grinned at me and again she said,

"'*I'm here, I'm there, I'm everywhere,*
I'm going to make you have gray hair.'"

The Doctor would have proceeded, but I stopped him with a gasp of horror.

"My God, Dr. Blitz!" I exclaimed, "go over and look at yourself in the mirror!"

He stared at me for one wild second, then stumbled to his feet and looked into the glass, there to behold for himself the appalling mystery which had almost blinded me with bewilderment.

The man's hair was turning gray before his eyes. The thick, bushy, black tufts of hair were fading into premature gray.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "then the rest of it—the rest of it will also be true."

"What do you mean by the rest of it?" I asked.

For reply he fumbled in his pocket and produced a folded piece of paper.

"I found this imbedded in the orange I ate for breakfast," he said brokenly.

I opened the paper and read:

"'*You're going to laugh, you're going to cry*
In another day you're going to die.'

(*To be Continued*)

He produced a folded piece of paper

Yellow Vengeance

By ALLAN HAGGARD

WOE unto him who, with theft in his heart, shall lay covetous hands upon the Sacred Pearl of Argnore, my gift to the temple of the Eyeless One. Upon him and whomsoever willingly hath abetted him shall death, unseen, descend from out the air in proof of my righteous anger. And in death there shall appear upon his forehead the image of the Sacred Token for which he forfeited life. But if one, guiltless and pure of heart, shall innocently possess the Black Pearl of Argnore, then, when unmerited death is close upon him, shall the Pearl vanish even under the eyes of mine avengers and by mine own hand be restored whence it was stolen. This, my prophecy, shall be fulfilled in a far age and in a far land.—Excerpt from the ancient Chronicles of Gautama Buddha.

With her body shielding the movement from the eyes of the others, she raced behind her and dropped it into one of the half-filled test tubes

AT her first, startled glimpse at the man in the office doorway, Carolyn Willis was conscious of an inner, intuitive warning of impending danger. It was not the man himself but something about him which sent pricking shudders of fear and reasonless dread racing up her spine. She clutched at the high counter to aid sagging knees and stared at him while the blood drained from her cheeks. The man, who had slipped hastily through the door and banged it shut behind him as if to bar out unseen pursuers, stood panting with his back braced against the door, and outstretched palms hard pressed against its panels.

He scarcely glanced at the girl behind the counter. His haunted eyes roamed the deserted offices of the Oceanic Steamship Company as if he expected to see whatever it was he feared spring up from the shadows beyond some one of the darkened desks. Each quick breath rasped out of his throat with a hoarse rattle. His dry tongue continually tried to moisten fear-parched lips. As his eyes returned to the girl he attempted to speak, but the only sound that issued from his lips was an inarticulate gurgle of abject terror.

Carolyn Willis struggled hard to conquer the hyperphysical fear which the man's fear—not the man—roused in her. She glanced, seeking reassurance, about the familiar office in which she was the manager's confidential stenographer. She assured herself, mentally, that she was in the Low office building on Broadway, New York, and that, even though she was alone in the otherwise deserted suite—a last minute batch of important letters had delayed her a full hour after everyone else had gone—she was in no possible danger. Reason confirmed this but failed utterly to dissipate the girl's persistent impression of an outre, death-dealing menace which hovered, like a miasmatic swamp mist, in the atmosphere surrounding the visitor. Summoning all her resolution she spoke:

"W-w-hat do you want?" she stammered.

With a final backward glance over his shoulder, the man stumped across the floor toward her and she saw he was club-footed with a heavy, three-inch shoe sole lengthening his left leg. As he came within the circle of the one counter light, Carolyn saw him clearly for the first time.

Though he was not in a sailor's uniform, his garb suggested the sea; his age might have been anything from thirty up, for his wind-bronzed face was deep-lined with the ineradicable brand of that sort of dissipation that saps ten years of life in one. But it was his eyes which caught and held the girl's shivery attention irresistibly. They were sunken, beady, black eyes that mirrored an evil soul—eyes which were a revelation of a life ruthless and cruel and deliberately unregenerate—but now dulled to lifelessness by fear so stark and unmitigated it seemed to the girl that he must feel the implacable clutch of an avenging hand, at last claiming its just due for long-past, hidden crimes.

"You sell steamer tickets here, Miss?" he questioned haltingly as he reached the counter.

"Yes, in office hours."

The man drew a huge roll of bills from the inner pocket of his coat. His rope-gnarled fingers shook like aspens as he spread the money out before Carolyn's amazed eyes.

"Give me one—quick," he demanded.

"But where do you wish to go?"

"South America, Africa—anywhere your steamer goes—provided it goes at once," he answered and then realizing that his frantic speech must arouse suspicion, he added: "I am ill. The doctor tells me I must take an immediate sea voyage. It doesn't matter where, but I must leave at once."

"The Ecudor sails for Buenos Aires at noon tomorrow," the girl informed him. "The office is closed tonight. If you will return in the morning you can engage passage."

"Couldn't I go on board tonight? Where is she lying? You see, Miss, I'm a stranger and——"

AS he talked the man had been glancing furtively about the office. Now, looking over his shoulder toward the frosted glass panels of the office door, speech froze in his throat and died away to a gasp of horror. Carolyn's glance followed his terrorized eyes to the door. Silhouetted clearly against the glass was the shadow of a figure, stooping in the outside corridor as if to listen—a strangely sinister figure with the queerly knotted turban of an East Indian upon its head.

"Trapped! They're here," the man gasped. He reeled against the counter and sagged to his knees, fumbling with his crippled foot while the girl still stared in new fright at the shadow upon the door. Suddenly and silently the stooping shadow rose to a tall man's full height, paused for a brief instant and vanished. The shaking fingers of the man at the counter were pawing aimlessly at her hand bag when Carolyn again turned toward him. His bronzed face had become ashy gray and in his haunted eyes was the hopeless appeal of one who sees Death's unescapable hand outstretched to him. When he spoke it was with the quick, jerky incoherence of a man utterly mastered by desperation.

"Here, Miss, take this—want a favor—take this," he began stripping off a hundred dollar bill from his money roll and thrusting it unsteadily into Carolyn's resisting fingers. "Don't ask questions—I've got to get away from here, quick—business appointment." He paused as if to collect his scattered wits. "You know where the little cemetery is on Eleventh Street just off Sixth Avenue. Easy found if you don't know. Going to make a strange request, Miss. Walk by that cemetery tomorrow just at sundown. Don't be afraid. No harm intended. Don't ask why—I'll explain later. Be there sure at sundown tomorrow, and get another hundred dollar bill. I'm going. Must 'phone first."

Without permission he seized the counter phone and gave a number. The instant the connection was made he spoke excitedly in an alien tongue which the girl could not understand, though she caught the word "Eleventh Street." The man banged down the phone and with marvelous agility for one with a crippled foot, vaulted over the counter and fled to a window beyond which was a fire escape. He threw open the window as Carolyn cried out an indignant protest. Then, just as he would have stepped out to the fire escape, Carolyn saw a hand and a face rise on the rungs of the ladder above the level of the window sill. The face was a swarthy yellow with a spotless white turban wound round the head above it and in its burning eyes was the demoniac glare of long-nursed hatred.

The club-footed man shrank back from the apparition with a gasping scream. He whirled round, re-vaulted the counter and dashed out by the door through which he had entered. The face on the fire escape instantly vanished.

Carolyn Willis was thoroughly alarmed. She caught up her gloves and hand bag and fled from the prosaic, work-a-day business office which suddenly had become the stage setting of the strange and inexplicable mystery which surrounded the club-footed man. She glanced fearfully up and down the corridor as the door closed behind her. It was empty, silent. The club-footed man had disappeared. With trembling fingers she pressed the elevator bell and gave a heart-felt sigh of relief as the lights of the cage appeared.

"You're late tonight, Miss Willis," said Danny, the elevator man, with a friendly smile.

"Did you just take a club-footed man down, Danny," she inquired hurriedly.

"I brought a feller up a while ago who walked with a limp," Danny answered. "Don't remember him going down."

"There's something strange going on in this building tonight," the girl warned as she stepped out on the ground floor. "Be careful and keep your eyes open, Danny. Look out for that club-footed man and another one, too, with a white turban around his head. I wonder if I should call the police."

The elevator man laughed.

"Leave it to me," he said confidently. "I'll keep an eye on your floor and if I see anything that don't look right I'll have the cops in. Goodnight."

AS she clung to a subway strap on her way to the little up-town apartment where she lived with her mother, Carolyn Willis found her mind obsessed by conflicting emotions. She still trembled as she re-visualized the haunted eyes of the club-footed man, the inexpressibly sinister shadow outside the office door and the eyes, gleaming with hatred, which had appeared upon the fire-escape. But in the commonplace, every-day environment of a crowded subway express, the poignancy of the fear and horror she had felt in the deserted offices of the steamship company gradually lessened. Bizarre and unexplainable as the mysterious events of the evening had been, she reassured herself by remembering that she was living in present day New York where a tale such as hers would be tolerantly laughed at as the exaggerated fantasy of an over-imaginative girl. Now that she was free of the strange atmosphere of mystery and intrigue which centered about the club-footed man, she found herself wondering whether, in truth, her own imagination and over-tense nerves had not created the larger part of her first certainty that Fate suddenly had catapulted her into the web of some fantastic mystery destined to unwind itself to a tragic end.

As she stood before the mirror in her own room after her mother's kiss, Carolyn shook a reproving finger at her reflection—an entirely entrancing reflection it was, with its dark hair and wistful, big eyes; its delicately chiselled face whose every aristocratic line was the heritage of her Virginia forefathers; and its slender, chic girlish figure.

"Carolyn Willis, you call yourself a business woman," she chided. "And tonight because you saw a club-footed man who talked wildly, and a shadow on a door, you felt and acted like a novel-mad miss who reads wild adventure into each every-day happening she encounters. If the club-footed man's eyes were haunted," she shivered again at the recollection, "they needn't have haunted you."

As she pulled off her glove the crumpled hundred dollar bill her strange visitor had thrust into her unwilling fingers fell to her dressing table. The bill, at least, was real, she was forced to confess. It recalled the tryst the club-footed had made for the following evening at the little, ancient cemetery that lies with such calm quietude in the midst of the lower city's traffic roar. Of course, Carolyn did not intend to keep the appointment made without her consent, but the thought sent a creepy chill of trepidation over her from head to foot.

"I'll take this money down to the office in the morning and return it to the club-footed man when he comes in for his steamer ticket," she decided, and went in to her mother and dinner, with the mental resolution to put the incident out of her mind.

The instant she reached the Low Building the following morning she heard of the murder. The elevator men were excitedly discussing it with the starter; the hordes of office girls who had read the first accounts in the morning papers were talking of it in awed whispers.

"And, Ella, he was a club-footed man and he was garrotted with a braided silk cord, think of that," ejaculated a girl who worked on the same floor with Carolyn. The latter felt the blood drain out of her face as it had on the previous evening when she first saw the club-footed man. The instant she was at her desk she picked up a paper. There it was—all and more than she had feared—spread upon the first page. Carolyn felt her blood chillicily as she read.

An unknown man, presumed to be about forty years of age and still unidentified, had been found dead shortly after midnight on the ledge of the corridor window on the Oceanic Steamship company's floor. Cruelly knotted about his neck was a braided silk cord of strange design. He had been strangled. Evidently, the paper related, there had been a struggle, for upon his forehead was a jet black bruise of the size and shape of a small egg; also one of the man's shoe heels—the one worn on his club-foot—was missing. Robbery was not the motive of the murderer for a large amount of money was found in the victim's pockets, undisturbed, though his clothes had been thoroughly searched. The police were without additional clews.

Carolyn covered her face with her hands to hide its ashy hue from the other girls in the office and debated what duty required of her. She and only she, could describe the sinister, turbanned figure which had thrown its shadow upon the door and later had appeared upon the fire escape. Her first impulse was to call up police headquarters and immediately reveal all she knew. Then she thought of the horde of reporters who, instantly, would waylay her with questions and cameras and unwelcome publicity. To see her daughter's picture and name involved in a New York murder mystery would be a frightful shock to her mother's frail health.

"I'll wait until tonight and tell Bob first and get his advice," Carolyn decided. Bob Hartley, chief chemist in the Wilson and Davis Laboratories was her fiancee and her decision to take him into her confidence before injecting herself into the great city's newest murder sensation gave her the first ray of comfort she had felt since she knew what had happened.

All through the day she worked automatically like one in a daze. At her lunch hour she called Bob Hartley up.

"I must see you as soon as I can leave the office this evening. Oh, Bob, it's terribly, terribly important and awful," she pleaded frantically for her every nerve was rawed to the quick. "Will you come to the office for me at five and please, please not fail under any circumstances?"

"Of course," came back over the wire in Bob's cheery voice. "I suppose you're upset, Carolyn dear, by that fiendish murder in your building. I'm going to be tied up at the laboratory until very late tonight, but I'll slip away at five and meet you. Don't be nervous."

As the long day dragged away Carolyn's dread grew with each hour. The fact that she had a hundred dollars of the murdered man's money, given her on condition that she be at the little cemetery on Eleventh Street at sundown, seared her to the soul with scorching fear. Why had he asked her to be at the cemetery? What did he hope to obtain through her? And, now that he was dead, what strange complications would ensue when she told her unbelievable story? These, with a hundred other equally disturbing conjectures, whirled through her brain in ceaseless succession. She was wholeheartedly thankful when Bob Hartley—big and cheery and radiating a deliciously comforting atmosphere of security and protection—appeared promptly at five.

"And now tell me all about it, dearest," he urged as they reached the street and with an anxious glance at Carolyn's white, haggard face. She told him breathlessly, almost incoherently. At the mention of the tryst at the Eleventh Street cemetery, Bob's lips tightened in a straight line of definite determination. He hailed a cab.

"We'll keep that appointment at the cemetery and see what happens," he declared resolutely.

"Oh, Bob, no, no," Carolyn cried in terror. "I'm afraid."

"I'll be right with you if anything should happen," he assured her. "I don't see what could possibly occur for the club-footed man who asked you to be there is dead. Anyway we'll keep the engagement at sundown. Then I must slip back to the laboratory for a couple of hours—I've some tests under way which won't wait. Then I'll call for you at your home and take you to detective headquarters. You'll have to tell what you know sooner or later, Carolyn, and by going tonight I think I can arrange it so you can avoid the reporters."

He helped her into a cab, still reluctant and fearful, and gave the Eleventh Street address just off Sixth Avenue.

A hundred years ago when Greenwich Village was a suburb of New York—all of the city lay between the river and what is now Park Row—Washington Square was the city's burying ground, flanked by other, smaller cemeteries. One of these—almost the oldest in the city—was located just around the corner of Sixth Avenue and Eleventh Street. In a hundred years, the irresistible onward sweep of the living has swept by and all but engulfed this last resting place of the silent, unresisting dead. Only a fragment of the former cemetery remains—a mere V-shaped wedge, protected from the street by a high iron fence and hedged in on every side by business houses and homes built almost under the shadow of the crumbling stone head-pieces on which are inscribed names once prominent but now long-forgotten. It was this tiny burial place, a relic of a past, century, which had been chosen by the club-footed man as his rendezvous with Carolyn Willis.

QUITE inexplicably, as the cab swung from Fifth Avenue into Eleventh Street, all the fear and dread the girl had endured in the club-footed man's presence on the previous evening returned. She could not banish the burning, malevolent eyes of the man who had intercepted the club-footed one's flight by the fire escape from her memory. They were seared upon her brain and in her imagination they seemed fixed now, with unlessened hatred, upon herself.

"Well, here we are dear," Bob said, interrupting her morbid train of thought as the cab slowed up and stopped. Then, as he opened the door and caught a glimpse of the street, his face grew suddenly grave. "Something has happened here," he cried with growing excitement. "The sidewalk outside the little cemetery is packed by a mob. Perhaps you better sit in the cab while I take a look."

"Please not! Please don't leave me for an instant," Carolyn begged almost hysterically for either in reality or in imagination, she could not determine which, she thought she had caught a glimpse of a white turbanned head in the gloom of an areaway across the street.

(*Continued on page 10*)

A strangely sinister figure with the queerly knotted turban of an East Indian upon its head

Her Father's Blood

By P. L. ATKINSON

Mr. Atkinson has written one of the most absorbing stories of his career in "Her Father's Blood." And that is saying a great deal, for this virile writer is known to readers the country over

NO properly understand this story you must know that the father of Dorothea Solinger was a thoroughgoing scamp, Who had deserted his mother and his year-old daughter when they were in want, and had never returned. The mother had died soon after, and young Dorothea had been adopted by her father's brother and sister-in-law, who had no children of their own.

And there she had been brought up, ignorant of the whereabouts of her father and, as time went on, caring little. He had deserved nothing else from her. Yet, to her surprise, once in a long time she would sit and ponder upon the fact that, somewhere in the world, her father lived and had his being—if, indeed, he still lived. Somewhere the man who was her own flesh and blood moved in his own circle-thought his own thoughts, carried out his own exist, ence. At such times a curious softness would steal into her reflection about the man, a peculiar tenderness that had no real foundation or basis in fact, a sentimentality that was hardly warranted by the circumstances. For, after all, he was her father—and she would have liked, at these times, to have seen him and talked with him.

* * * * *

WeeORTHEA awoke in the dark with a start. Wee Sitting in the library, she had fallen asleep toward nightfall. Her aunt and uncle had gone out after dinner and had left her there, and upon returning, before midnight, had supposed that she had retired, as the library and the rest of the house were in darkness.

The figure, gun in hand, swung into the room

The nurse did as she was told, but the girl refused to touch the thing. "Take it away—I don't want to see it," she murmured, shrinking back

A cold fear ran through her as she awoke. She heard no sound, yet she knew she was not alone. There was a presence in the room, a Thing that lived. The house was still, and the room was shrouded in impenetrable darkness. She shivered, though the night was warm, and it was as if bony fingers had clutched at her heart.

Her almost paralyzed hand reached forward to the string of the table lamp at her side. Petrified with a nameless terror, fearing she scarcely knew what, yet knowing that something was in the room with her, she pulled the beaded string with a convulsive movement. The room was lighted instantly with a soft light.

Her instinct had been right. She was not alone.

A gasp of fear, mingled with relief at the humanness of the midnight visitor, was forced from her throat. "Oh!" she exclaimed, hand going to her throat at the sight of the masked figure, gun in hand, that came forward, catlike, the instant the light was switched on.

"Good evenin', miss," said the burglar. "I didn't have no idea yer wuz here."

"What do you want?" came from her weakly.

"Just lissen at her," came from the burglar, sarcastically. "Why, I'm the piano tuner, of course. I charges yer the fambly jools to tune the old organ!!" his voice changed abruptly. "Say, looka-here, kid," he said. "I won't do you no harm, if yer keeps yer trap closed an' gives up widout no holler, but if yer tries ter pull anything, why, I wentilates yer proper, an' don't let nobody tell yer different Get me?"

He advanced threateningly, and she retreated, fearful of the revolver, and of the cruel, sensuous leer that illuminated his face. Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she was able to make no reply.

"Say," he went on, "now that I lamps yer proper, yer a (deleted) good looker, I'll tell the cockeyed woild!" He advanced still closer, and she shrank away as far as possible.

"Take what you want and go," came in agonized accents from her.

A mocking laugh greeted her. "Take what I want—that's a good one. All right—I'll take it." He had her in his arms in an instant.

She struggled, the fear gone from out of her. A huge hand went over her mouth, to prevent an outcry, and his evil face came closer and closer to her white one.

She pounded with futile fists against him, and suddenly, as she felt his hot, foul breath close to her, changed her tactics and drew her finger nails sharply across his toughened skin, bringing the blood. Taken aback by the suddenness of it, he stumbled backward the revolver flying out of his hand and striking against the corner of a chair.

"You little——" burst from him, and the rest was drowned in the roar of the revolver shot. Acrid

(Continued on Page 31)

YELLOW VENGEANCE

(Continued from Page 3)

Clinging to Bob Hartley's arm, she staggered out of the cab and edged her way through the throng that completely blocked the sidewalk. From somewhere down the street came the ominous clang of a hurrying ambulance bell. The sound prepared Carolyn for what she saw as Bob edged his way to the van of the crowd and she found herself clinging with a trembling hand to the iron paling that shut in the cemetery.

Inside, a grave-faced policeman stood on guard over a prostrate something that lay still and silent across a grave. Its face was covered. As the ambulance clanged its way through the mob the policeman stooped and uncovered its head. Carolyn pressed two shaking hands cruelly tight against her lips to suppress her instinctive shriek of terror.

Before her lay the body of a dead man. Around its neck was a braided silken cord and, on its white forehead, a reddish spot was growing perceptibly blacker—a spot the size and shape of a small egg.

A man, dishevelled and excited edged his way through the crowd to the policeman's side.

"I think I saw the murderer," he exclaimed. "Anyway I saw a man climb over the cemetery fence and run across the street. He vanished in one of the cellar doorways."

"Would you know him again? What did he look like?" the officer demanded with wuick interest.

"Know him? I should think I would. He was one of those yellow-skinned Indian fellows dressed in long white robes and with a white cloth tied round his head."

"For God's sake, Bob, take me away from this terrible place," Carolyn pleaded brokenly and with her terrified eyes affrightedly roaming the faces in the crowd. "The killer is somewhere close by. I saw him across the street as we drove up."

The girl clutched at her throat as if choking.

"I can feel his cord upon my throat. Oh, quick, take me away before he can get me," she cried.

BOB HARTLEY'S face was very grave as he led Carolyn hurriedly back to their waiting cab.

"I didn't take your story very seriously at first," he informed her with no attempt to conceal his present deep anxiety. "Now I realize that this business is a life and death matter. I'm going to send you home in this cab. Go into your apartment and stay there no matter what happens or what ruse is adopted to get you out. I must run back to the laboratory for an hour or a costly experiment will be ruined. The instant I can get away I will go out to your house and escort you to police headquarters and——"

The man's words were interrupted by a scream from Carolyn. Following her eyes, Bob Hartley saw a dim white-robed figure appear suddenly from a sunken doorway and peer deliberately into the cab. His sunken, inscrutable eyes flashed with triumph, as they fixed themselves on the girl's face. The cab sped on and the face was lost in the gathering gloom.

"He saw me! He recognized me!" the girl moaned in abject fright as she clung to Hartley. "It was the man who was on the fire escape last night. I would know those terrible eyes anywhere, any time. What shall I do?"

FOR a moment Bob Hartley was tempted to abandon his partially completed laboratory task to the ruin that he knew would insue with another hour's delay. But once again, the influence of New York's every day life and environment ameliorated the keen edge of fear. Rolling along Fifth Avenue in a cab at dusk it seemed unreasonably fantastic to be alarmed over Carolyn's safety during a cab ride to the upper Seventies.

"If I drop off at the laboratory for an hour as I really must, will you remain in this cab and drive straight home to your mother and remain there until I come?" he questioned.

"I will do whatever you tell me to," she agreed.

"You will not be afraid?"

"No-o, not very much but please come quickly," she answered hesitantly.

"I will," Bob promised. "And here we are at the laboratory. I'll drop off. Don't stir out of this cab until you get home."

"I won't, dear," she replied as he stooped and kissed her and gave her hand a reassuring farewell caress.

Although she struggled against it, the instant she was alone in the cab all of Carolyn's fears swept back upon her with redoubled intensity. In each passing car she visioned the face and the eyes she dreaded; at each traffic crossing halt she searched the throngs of pedestrians for a white-robed figure in a turban.

"I won't be such a coward," she asserted valiantly to herself. "After all what have I to fear even from such a man as the murderer of the club-footed one and the other?"

As the thought passed through her mind the car lurched to a quick stop to avoid a collision with another, and Carolyn's hand bag shot out of her lap, struck the front of the cab and fell to the floor with its contents tumbled out in a heap. As the girl gathered them up she shrank back from a black object which she had never before seen. Her eyes widened with new terror.

Lying on the floor at her feet was the thick heel of the club-footed man's shoe.

More than this, the fall to the floor had touched some secret spring in the heel and, now it lay before her eyes, open, revealing a marvellous black pearl as large as a small egg and of enthralling though strangely sinister beauty.

It was many minutes before she found courage to stoop and pick up the jewel. It was enclosed in a solid gold setting of a strange and fantastic design upon which were inscribed cabalistic characters never revealed to men except from the altar of a sacred Buddhist shrine. But the huge black jewel itself was what held the girl's gaze as a snake's eyes hold a prospective victim.

"SHANGHAIED"

by

Paul Hervey Fox

in next week's

MIDNIGHT

A tale full of surprises and shivers

As she looked, the pearl constantly seemed to change its hue in response to her thoughts. Some times it seemed a jet black pool in which, faintly outlined, there appeared a yellow face and turbanned head. Sometimes it grew lighter in hue and seemed almost opaque and then the face vanished and in the depths of the jewel there appeared dimly a great, snowy mountain against which nestled a temple of strange architecture. Like one in a dream, Carolyn felt the cab stop, saw the door open and heard her chauffeur's words, "This is the address you gave, Miss."

The girl caught up the deteached heel and its hidden jewel and slipped it hastily into her hand bag. Then she stepped out of the cab and for the third time on that day crushed her hands against her lips to stifle a scream of terror. Through the window of a cab which had stopped directly behind hers she saw the yellow face, the turbanned head, the malevolent, piercing eyes of the double murderer.

Instinctively she sprang back into the cab for protection and, as the driver looked at her inquiringly, she mumbled out Bob Hartley's laboratory address with the plea that he drive fast. Woman-like, in her hour of danger she was fleeing for protection to the man she loved. All through the long drive down-town she watched through the cab's rear window for a sign of the East Indian's pursuing taxi but in the crowded traffic could not discover it. At the door of the laboratory she leaped out, threw the astonished driver a bill and fled precipitately up the stairway to Hartley's second floor workshop.

"What if he should be gone," she thought in a panic of dread as she climbed the stairs. But there was a light within the room and with a glad cry of relief she threw open the door and sprang inside with his name on her lips.

THEN, indeed, her horror reached its final climax. Bound to a chair in the center of the room sat Hartley. Round his neck was one of the deadly silken cords and behind him, studying Carolyn with grimly triumphant eyes, stood an East Indian who, in appearance, might have been the brother of the murderous one who had pursued her taxi.

As she backed toward the door she heard it close with a bang. Glancing over her shoulder she saw the second Indian and if the fires of hatred in his eyes had scorched to the sloul when she first saw them, now they consumed utterly.

"Brother, all is well," the newcomer said to his comrade in a singularly soft and soothing voice. "The accomplices of those who already have died with the mark of the Sacred Jewel upon their brows as was commanded, are within the reach of our avenging hands. Within the time of the ringing of a temple bell they, too, shall perish. Guatama Buddha is almighty."

At her first glimpse of the chief of the Indian pair, Carolyn had retreated from him, step by step, until her back was against the shelf on which Bob Hartley's experimental retorts stood. Her hand bag was clutched in her hands which were behind her back. As she heard the man's death threat and realized that possession of the jewel must appear guilt in his eyes, she felt in the bag for the black pearl and, with her body shielding the movement from the eyes of the others, reached behind her and dropped it into one of the half-filled retorts.

"Woman, approach," the garrotter commanded. Carolyn glanced at Bob for advice.

"Obey him. We have no choice," he gasped, for the cord on his neck, though not yet twisted in th strangling death knot, was tight. Slowly the girl obeyed. The East Indian set out a chair beside Hartley's and silently motioned Carolyn to be seated. Instantly thereafter she was bound hand and foot and a second silken death cord slipped about her neck.

"Desecrators of the Temple of the Eyeless One, the hour of death is at hand," the Indian Chief began in the suave, soft accents with which he might have acknowledged the offer of a cigarette. "Know that whomsoever with thieving heart lays hands upon the Sacred Black Pearl of Argnore must die, for so has it been written by the hand of Guatama Buddha. Though you stole it not, as did those who already have met their righteous punishment, nevertheless you possess the blessed token and have looked with an unbeliever's eyes upon its sacred inscription which none but the chiefest of the chief priests may gaze upon and live. For this you shall die and in death, in proof of your guilt, there shall appear upon your foreheads the image of the Sacred Pearl for which you have forfeited life."

He ceased speaking and gazed intently into Carolyn's face. His eyes pierced like the blade of a knife and withered like the touch of flame.

"Speak! What do you want of me?" the girl cried out as his scrutiny snapped her self-control like a broken thread.

"Nothing of you in words," the turbanned one answered gently. "I gaze thus at you so that I may read the thoughts your lips have not spoken and, thus, discover the hiding place of the Sacred Pearl."

A moment longer the girl writhed under the burning gaze of eyes that seemed to sap and absorb her will-power as they probed her mind. Without proof, Carolyn realized the man truly was reading her thoughts.

"Hornu, the woman has placed the gift of Gautama Buddha to our temple in a jar upon the shelf against which she rested when I commanded her to the chair of death," he announced at last. "Seek it now in the third glass jar from the farther end. Bring it to me that these two, as death comes upon them, may look once more upon that for which they are doomed to die."

Bob Hartley struggled fiercely against his bonds for there was that quiet assurance of the assasin's voice which precluded all hope. His efforts were vain as a child's might have been, for no human strength can burst the braided and knotted cords with which the East Indian killers bind their victims.

"For God's sake spare the girl! She is innocent," he cried.

The garrotter's eyes seemed almost kindly as they dwelt on Bob's face, but no slightest hint of mercy shone from them.

(Continued on Page 31)

He Fell in Love with a Ghost

By FULTON OURSLER

A Remarkable Story of the Supernatural

SHOULD have married a woman with red hair. That I married Etta Trent, with her masses and coils of yellow hair, was, I am now certain, the damnable mistake of my youth.

With a red-haired woman as my wife, I might have developed a brilliant genius for musical composition, instead of passing my days as a dawdling dreamer, spending the fortune my father accumulated in business. Today, my sonatas might have been on the programs of Rachmannoff; my concertos and symphonies played by all the great orchestras. As it is, my music is all unwritten; I may die with all my songs hushed in my heart.

There remains with me now one strange and dazzling hope, and it is of that singularly re-awakened hope that I shall tell you.

A famous physician, not many months ago, told me I should have selected a red-haired wife. He was a specialist in a new form of psychology. By his peculiar methods of analysis, he insisted that he could probe the very soul of a patient. Actually he pretended to divine the suppressed desires of the heart. After hours of asking me peculiar questions, to which I returned only indifferent replies, he announced to me that I cherished a secret longing for a woman with red hair.

Blandly he suggested that I divorce my wife and try to find another with suitable tresses.

"Go find a girl with hair like scarlet flame," he advised me, with a tempting smile. "You follow her, all the way to perdition, for with her you can be happy, even in hell!"

"That does not answer my question," I persisted. "I came here for a mental examination. Am I sane or am I not?"

"You are perfectly sane," he assured me.

"Is there the slightest indication of madness? Have I the first symptoms of being insane? That is what it is highly important for me to know. No quibbling, doctor. I don't want you to be tactful. I want to know the truth!"

"You are entirely normal," he assured me gravely. "You are freer of unsatisfied impulses than most people who never question their mentality. No one, sir, is entirely sane. We are all a bit crazy. No! You would be happier with a red-haired girl, because you happen to want a red-haired girl. But you are sane, sir—one hundred per cent sane!"

I smiled gratefully. I paid him his fee, which was atrocious. If I ever had to begin life over again, as a poor man, I should become a specialist in Psychology, and get rich. I thanked him, though it was he who should have thanked me, and I departed.

But I did not take his advice.

I had not told the learned doctor the whole truth, as I intend to disclose the whole truth, here and now. Even then I was involved in a stupendous domestic entanglement. My wife had already threatened to leave me. My purpose in going to see the man was to be sure that I was sane. He was definite in telling me I was perfectly normal mentally, with the exception of that desire for a red-haired girl. My mind was not unbalanced. This assurance was, no doubt, worth the price he had demanded of me.

I knew also that he had found out the truth about me.

All my life, I have admired red-haired girls. I remember the first time I ever saw one. It was at a birthday party given for my cousin, Edwin Bowers. The children were playing a game very popular in those days called "Choose!" The girls took turns in choosing the boys they wished for partners. Among all the little girls there, one drew my eyes like a magnet. She had a pale face, but piquant; dark blue eyes and hair flaming like the crimson leaves of autumn. In dumb worship of her beauty, I stared at her.

I was an extremely shy child. The other boys were boisterous in the fun of the game, calling loudly to the girls and there was scuffling and boyish riot. I retreated from their midst and stood off, in a corner, alone, watching that one little girl. She felt my gaze and returned it. My heart seemed to expand when she walked up to me and kissed me.

She had chosen me.

The memory of that childhood kiss from that red-haired little girl was one of my life's most vivid experiences. I never saw her again, but I have never forgotten her.

I was married to the most loving woman in the world.

AS I grew older, my musical studies completely isolated me. In the experiences which my friends and companions knew, as they came out of adolescence into manhood, I had no share. They had sweethearts and adventure. I had my piano, melodic dreams, and the inspiration of all the great composers who had gone before me.

My relaxation was in athletics. Seemingly I cared nothing for women; that phase of manhood slumbered within me, like a drowsing giant. My friends told me I was handsome, and should find a mate, but in this they were mistaken. I was not handsome. I was—and am—big of frame, with sturdy muscles, and great vitality. But my face is carved in the lines and angles which are fashioned by the impress of study and profound thought. I have not the idle regularity of feature which attracts the eyes of women. In spite of this defect, however, women were kind to me. They made me feel uneasy in their presence; a persistence, I suppose, of my old shyness. I shrank from their company.

Then, one evening, less than two years ago, I left Aeolian Hall after a concert, intending to hurry home and work after dinner

(*Continued on Page 18*)

Have you ever seen a ghost? Do you know anyone who has? Write us a letter about it—we will publish the best we receive and pay for them at our usual rates

My own, my beloved, was there before me

The Dragon's

By John R.

For a moment the soldier hesitated; then, with a swift glance about, which told him they were alone, he ground out between his strong white teeth, in slightly accented but good English, "Go on yourself, you damned Yankee!" and accompanied his words with a sudden, terrible blow with his heavy rifle

THE time was June, 1900. The place was Peking, the capital of China.

The Boxer uprising had been put down, and the triumphant soldiers of the allied armies had entered the city.

Some looting had been done by the soldiers of the various little armies, but the Americans, British and French had been forbidden to rob or slay; and for the most part the order had been obeyed. Only the German soldiers ran riot in the city, plundering at will.

Captain Somers, of the American army, was hurrying through one of the business streets in what is known as the Chinese City, on his way to Headquarters to report on a mission he had been sent on. The frequent sight of cruel and ruthless plundering, by German soldiers, of the well-filled shops, made him quicken his steps almost to a run. He might not interfere, but it enraged him almost beyond endurance to witness the looting he could not stop.

He turned down a deserted side street so that he could avoid the distasteful spectacle. He had not gone far, however, when he discovered that the street was not deserted. Some thirty yards from him a native was fighting off two soldiers who were trying to take from him a small package. While Captain Somers still watched one of the soldiers struck the Chinaman on the head with the butt of his rifle, dropping him limp in the deep, black dust of the street.

The action had taken place in a few seconds, but already Somers was running swiftly toward the group, for the soldiers wore the American uniform. One of them chanced to look up and saw him approaching. He spoke to his companion, and then both took to their heels, heedless of the shouted order to halt.

The Captain let them go. He knew he could identify them later. The native, evidently from his dress, was a Lama priest. He lay prone and motionless on his back. The package, as it had seemed at a distance proved to be a small metal casket; and now it lay open by the side of the priest, revealing a number of loose, unset stones, among them a ruby of such amazing size and quality that Captain Somers was aghast. Without any unusual knowledge of jewels he yet was able to recognize this as a star ruby.

He shook his head and pushed the casket aside with his foot while he bent over the stunned man to revive him and get him out of danger with his precious casket.

The priest opened his eyes and stared at the officer bending over him. He evidently knew enough to realize that he need not fear the wearer of that uniform, and immediately he raised himself on his elbow and began to search for his casket. Somers pointed it out to him, and he eagerly clutched for it.

His hand had not reached it before a heavy boot came down on his wrist and held it powerless. Somers looked up and for the first time was conscious of the presence of a young, German soldier.

He had time to take in the bigness of the soldier's body and to note the lustful greed that sparkled in his blue eyes as they were lifted from the shining stones and met his stern gaze.

"Go on!" he commanded in English.

For a moment the soldier hesitated, then with a swift glance about, which told him they were alone, he ground out between his strong, white teeth in slightly accented but good English, 'Go on yourself, you damned Yankee!" and accompanied his words with a sudden, terrible blow with his heavy rifle. Captain Somers fell like one dead, his skull crushed.

The German soldier snarled like a wild beast, snatched up the casket, snapped shut the lid, thrust it into his breast and then ran, after casting a glance at the two unconscious figures, for the priest had fallen back and lay in a stupor.

At the corner of the street, the soldier stopped and looked back; then, seeing that neither of the men had moved and that there was no one in sight, he went on again, but with an arrogant, leisurely stride.

What he had not noticed was that the door of the house in front of which the two men lay, had opened slightly to enable someone within to follow his movements. It opened wider when the soldier had disappeared around the corner, and a man and woman sprang out and carried the priest into the house. Almost instantly they peered out again, and seeing no one, dragged in the body of the American captain. Then the door was closed again; and excepting for the signs of conflict in the dust of the street, there was nothing to indicate that anything untoward had taken place.

There was that tell-tale dust, however; and, presently the man came out of the house and with furtive glances up and down the street, effaced the impressions of feet and fallen bodies by stirring the dust about with his feet. Then he disappeared into the house again; and after that the ominous silence of fear and terror reigned.

THERE were two small bedrooms opening out of the room into which the two wounded men had been taken, and they were carried into these rooms and laid, one on each bed.

The priest revived almost as soon as he was placed on the bed. He made several futile efforts to rise before he was able to sit up. The blood from the wound on his shaven head was trickling down over his face, but he only wiped it away from his eyes and demanded, "The casket! What became of it?"

"It was carried away by the foreign devil soldier who struck down the one who came to your rescue."

"And that one?"

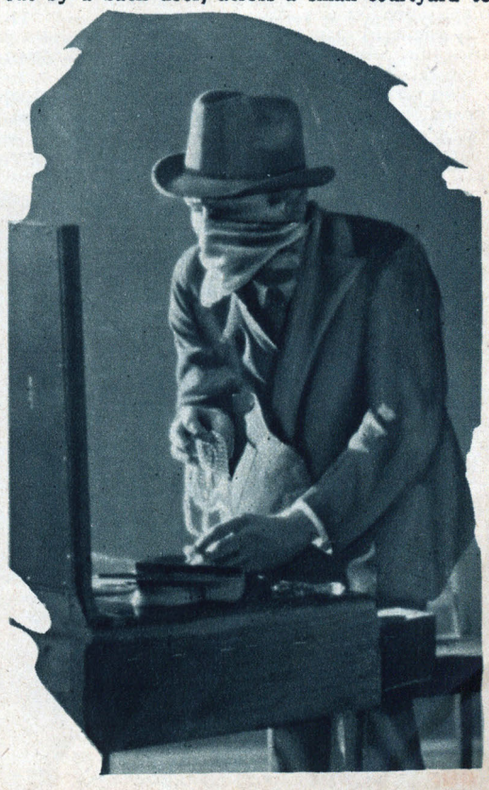
"He is in the other room, dead or dying."

"Help me up! I must go to the Prince."

"Can you walk?"

"I must. Help me!"

Supported by the man, the priest rose to his feet with an effort that evidently demanded all his will power as well as strength, and together they went out by a back door, across a small courtyard to



She opened her eyes and looked about, and in a moment was startled by the figure of a man bending over her dressing table

Eye

Coryell

Redolent with the ever-thrilling mystery of the Far East, mingled with the activity and adventure of the West, this absorbing narrative by a famous writer is one of the best stories of its kind published in recent years

"Miserable wretch!" came coldly from the lips of the other

another house, in the floor of which was a trap-door. This the whole man lifted and they both went down the opening to a tunnel, which they traversed as rapidly as possible.

It was a long passage and the priest was obliged to stop several times before the end was reached.

"Wait for me here!" the priest ordered. He then felt about in the darkness until he found what he sought in the wall. It was a sort of knob, which he pressed several times at irregular intervals. Almost instantly a tiny hole opened in the wall. The priest put his lips close to the hole and spoke a few words.

The hole closed at once and the priest turned to his right and passed through an opening which had silently come in the wall. He went on in the darkness without hesitation, and pressed another small knob in a peculiar way, and whispered some words through another hole that opened before him.

This time when the hole closed a door opened in the wall at his left hand, and sufficient light came through to enable him to see. He stepped through the opening, the door closed behind him as silently as it had opened, and two tall, half-naked men armed with heavy swords took their places, one on each side of him.

"You will have to help me; I am almost spent," he gasped, stumbling in his weakness.

They caught him quickly and half-carried him along the dimly lighted passage into what was evidently a sort of ante-room. There they seated him on a bench, and one of them left him in charge of the other, while he disappeared through a curtained doorway at one side. In a few moments he returned and resumed his place by the side of the priest, who was thus supported into a large chamber, at the farther end of which were gathered a number of Chinese, who showed by the richness of their garments and still more by the buttons on their hats that they were of the highest rank.

Seated in a chair somewhat higher than the others was a tall, thin man whose eyes glowed with a sombre fire. The two armed men led the priest to a spot directly in front of this man, and there left him, while they backed out of the room with every appearance of the greatest awe.

The wounded priest struggled to stand, but his strength was gone and he crumpled in a heap to the floor. No one moved to assist him, but the personage in the raised chair snapped out sharply, "Speak quickly! The casket?"

"It is gone," the priest gasped humbly; "stolen from me by a foreign devil soldier."

"Miserable wretch!" came coldly from the lips of the other.

"Unworthy to live, oh great one!" the priest moaned. "May I explain?"

"Speak!"

THE priest in a tone of humility and shame told how all the guardians of the jewels but himself had been murdered, and how he had contrived to secure the casket and escape, only to reach the door of his haven to be captured by two of the foreign devils; and then detailed what had happened after that.

"There is no excuse for failure," the great one said coldly. "Would you know the foreign devil who got the jewels?"

"Yes, I had a good look at him."

"The Dragon's Eye was in the casket?"

"Yes, oh great one."

"You will be forgiven when the Dragon's Eye has been recovered. All power, all wealth shall be given you, but do not return without the Dragon's Eye. Though it take you a month, a year, many years, do not return without it." He turned to the man nearest him. "Give him what he requires of men, money or advice. We are nothing without the Dragon's Eye. Go! waste no time!"

"The foreign devil who came to my assistance, oh great one?" murmured the priest.

"He shall be looked after. Let your one thought be the recovery of the Dragon's Eye."

"Yes, great one."

* * * * *

TWO weeks later Captain Somers, who had been reported missing, was found in the grounds of the American legation. He was insensible, his head was bound up and on his breast was pinned a note: "*The skull of this officer was crushed by a German soldier. Trephining has been done, and in my opinion he will live, but will always be paralyzed. He is now under the influence of an opiate.—The surgeon.*"

The handwriting of the note was remarkable for its neatness and delicacy, but there was no clew to its writer.

* * * * *

II

GEORGE W. BLACK was one of those men whom the war had left with enormous wealth. He had so many interests that his private offices occupied a whole floor of a great building in the Wall Street district. He was a director in one of the greatest financial institutions in the United States, and he was the controlling power in several great enterprises. The public knew very little about him, but the financial world always reckoned with him. He was known as a man whose money in an enterprise was practically synonymous with success.

He was physically a big man; not fat, but big in the sense of bone and muscle; broad of shoulder, big of hand, aggressive of manner. He was curt and gruff of speech, with an underlying insolence in all he said, or rather in the way he said whatever he had to say. To one person only did he betray

anything like softness; that was his daughter, Gertrude. With her he could not seem to be soft enough.

His offices were richly appointed, and his own private office was luxurious. Indeed luxury and display were almost a passion with him. The limousine in which he rode to and from his office was the last word in display and luxury; and his winter house in the city and his country villa by the seashore were notable in the same ways. He had to insist that his wife wore the clothes and the jewels that comported with his notions. He had no need to insist with his daughter, Gertrude; she was more than willing to carry out his ideas in that respect. And with what abandon she spent his money. Her allowance never sufficed.

A great deal of money was being lavished on preparations for her coming out ball, which was to be on her birthday in December of this year—1920. She would be eighteen then. A great, new ballroom was being added to the Long Island Villa for the occasion.

A great deal was being written in the society columns in regard to the coming event; and pictures of the villa and of Gertrude and of her mother were being printed. And all this greatly pleased George W. Black, who sat in his luxurious office and gloated over every printed word.

He was thus engaged one morning in November, neglecting important business to revel in this incense to his pride, when his door opened, and a very beautiful girl entered timorously, holding a big check book and several detached checks in her hand. Her face was very white and her big, blue eyes wide open with fright.

The magnate looked up. "Well, what do you want?" he demanded. "I didn't ring for you."

"I—I had to come to—to you, sir about—about one of the checks," the girl stammered.

"Go to Mr. Somers!" he snapped.

"I—I was afraid to do that," she faltered.

"Afraid!" he roared. "You haven't the soul of a mouse, Miss Carter. What are you afraid of? Do as I tell you! Don't bother me!"

The girl, his private secretary, looked ready to drop where she stood. She did indeed lean against the door frame for support. "Oh, please, Mr. Black!" she wailed.

"Damn it!" he roared. "Go!"

"Yes sir." She closed the door and left him. He smiled with the air of a satisfied tyrant and resumed his reading.

Less than fifteen minutes later he was disturbed again by the opening of the door. This time it was opened by a splendid specimen of young manhood, who walked into the office with a brisk step and the air of one to whom fear was unknown. He had the check book and checks in his hand, and Miss Carter followed behind him. And her terror seemed to have disappeared.

Mr. Black looked up with a scowl of annoyance. "What do you want, Bob?" he demanded gruffly. "If it's about that check, can't you settle it yourself? I don't want to be bothered."

"You'll have to be bothered about this, Mr. Black," was the quiet response. "It's very important—a forgery from all appearances."

"What's that?" snapped the magnate. "Let me see it! Why didn't you tell me, Miss Carter?"

"You wouldn't let me, sir," she answered steadily.

"Wouldn't let you!" he sneered. "How could I prevent your telling me? What makes you think it's a forgery, Bob?"

Bob Somers placed the check and check-book on the desk before the magnate. "It's perfectly evident. You signed a check for three hundred dollars to that man White in New Mexico. You see by the stub it was number 431. Here is check 431 of this series, made out for twenty thousand to Andreas Whitmore. You made no such check, did you?"

"Certainly not. Never heard of the man. Call up the bank! Have it looked into at once. You know what to do."

"One moment! The forgery is a perfect one. Miss Carter's handwriting is imitated in the body of the check and your name is almost as if you'd written it. In the back of the book a check has been removed. No doubt this one. Whoever did this has had access to your check-book. Also was clever enough to duplicate the number of a check which will be a long time in coming back."

MR. BLACK looked at Miss Carter, and his manner and tone were both charged with menacing accusation as he demanded, "What do you know about it, Miss Carter?"

"Nothing sir," she answered quietly.

"It wasn't Miss Carter," Somers said decisively.

Something in his manner made his employer look at him. Somers maintained a perfectly impassive countenance. Suddenly a pallor overspread the magnate's face, and he stared at the young man, not as if seeing him, but as if recalling something from the past.

"Leave it with me," he cried suddenly. "I'll attend to it, myself."

"Very well, sir," and Somers straightened up and turned to go.

"Do you think I did it, Mr. Black?" asked Miss Carter.

"No, no! Get out!" roared the magnate as if glad to have someone he dared vent his rage on.

Bob Somers, who was half way across the room, stopped and turned. "There is not the faintest suspicion of you, Miss Carter," he said in a tone that seemed to contain a challenge.

"Certainly not. I said so, didn't I?" Black's voice was hoarse with suppressed emotion.

A faint, scarcely perceptible smile twisted the girl's red lips, and she followed Somers out of the room. As the door closed behind them she touched him on the arm and, when he turned, looked wistfully up at him, saying, "You don't think I had anything to do with it, do you?"

"Of course not," he answered quickly. "It would be preposterous to think so."

There was such a passion of earnestness in his words and manner that the girl cast her eyes down and murmured faintly, "Thank you!"

Her face was flushed and happy as she took her place at her desk in the little room. He lingered a moment, looking at her and seeming disposed to say something more. Then he went on into his own private office beyond.

"THE POISON CUP"

by

Allan Haggard

In next week's

MIDNIGHT

Mr. Black, meanwhile, was studying the forged check, comparing the writing in the body of it with that of his secretary on the stubs; then carefully scrutinizing the forged signature. To his eye it was exactly like his own. His face was pale and beads of perspiration came out on his forehead.

He was still so engaged, apparently unable to desist, when the door of his office was thrown open noisily, and a beautiful and striking-looking girl entered breezily. She was above the medium height, a little over plump in a sensuous way, and carried herself in an assured, not to say arrogant manner. She was dressed in the extreme of the prevailing style and wore furs that must have cost a fortune.

She closed the door behind her with a slam and called out, "Hello, Daddy! Awfully busy?"

Her father had looked up slowly at her entrance and was staring at her. He did not answer her greeting, and she went over to his desk and kissed him. "I came for some money," she said.

"Sit down. I want to talk to you, Gertie." He indicated the chair at the end of his desk.

"No," she objected, "I haven't time. I only want some money."

"You must take the time. I have something to say to you."

She looked at him and then at the check-book and check on his desk. Then she sat down, saying hardily, "You've got a grouch on this morning. Going to lecture me instead of giving me the money?"

He picked up the check slowly and handed it to her. "What did you do with this?" he asked dully.

Her hand shook a little as she took the check, but she controlled herself and looked at the check. "What are you talking about?" she demanded half-angrily, half sulkily.

"You know very well what I'm talking about," he answered. "Why did you do it? Don't I give you money enough?"

She tossed her head and looked back into his eyes with an expression as stony as his own had ever been. "You are always wanting to know what I do with my money," she returned sullenly.

"But this!" he groaned, taking the check from her. "Don't you know that you could have been put in prison for this? I couldn't have saved you if the bank had found it out."

The sullenness deepened on her face and she looked toward the corner of the room, tapping the rug with the toe of one high-heeled boot.

"My God!" he cried, seeing she didn't mean to answer him, "why did you do it? Why did you do it? The disgrace—if it had been discovered! Why couldn't you have asked me for it? Have I ever refused you?"

"You might have refused that; and I had to have it," she snapped. "Where's the harm if you'd have let me have it if I'd asked? You're my father, aren't you?"

"Did you do it yourself, or did you get someone to do it for you?"

"I did it myself. It was easy enough."

"Gott!" he ejaculated. "Don't you understand what you've done? It is forgery, a prison offence. Do you think it makes any difference that you are my daughter? No. Only by good luck the bank didn't see it. Do you think nothing of the disgrace? My God! My God!" He groaned and buried his face in his hands.

"I tell you," she cried, "I had to have the money. I'd have been disgraced if I hadn't had it. What difference does it make anyhow since it wasn't found out?"

"It would be found out another time. I don't know now what Miss Carter thinks."

"That girl! Who cares for her? There won't be any other time."

He lifted his head and reached over and took one of her hands. "My darling!" he pleaded, "do you promise me you will never do it again? Suppose Bob had found it out?"

"He doesn't know?" she demanded with a quickness that showed how much importance she attached to having Bob Somers know.

"No, he doesn't know. No one suspects but me. You won't do it again, dearie?"

"No, I won't do it again since you make such a fuss about it. I had to have that money then; that's why I did it."

"What did you want it for?"

"I lost it at bridge."

"Twenty thousand at bridge! Gott! You gamble like that!"

"You don't want me to be a piker, do you? Oh, come Daddy," she went on with a swift change from sullenness to cajolery. "I won't do it again. Let me have a thousand dollars. I'm in a hurry."

"Who is this man Whitmore?" he demanded.

"A friend of Sadie Walcott's."

"He ought to be all right then."

"Oh, he's all right. Come across with the money, Daddy; I'm in a hurry. Now don't ask me what it's for; I don't like to give an account of every penny I spend."

"Wilful creature! And I have your promise?"

"Sure! Sure!" she agreed carelessly.

"All right then."

* * * * *

III

WHEN Gertrude Black stepped into her limousine after leaving her father, she was greeted by a very much decorated young woman who was lolling back among the cushions.

"Well, did we get our iron men?"

Gertie laughed. "Did I? Didn't I? When did I ever fail?"

"Gee!" sighed the other, "but that Papa of yours is a good thing! How much did you get?"

"Only a thousand. He was up a tree about something, and I didn't dare touch him for more. Fifth Avenue and Fortieth Street," she called through the tube to the chauffeur.

"How about a hundred of those simoleons for me, Gert? I feel lucky today, as if the spinning wheel of my fathers would spin right for me."

"It's never lucky for you, Sallie. It's throwing good money away to let you have it. But here you are if you insist on playing"; and with that she took a roll of bills from her bag and peeled off one for a hundred dollars.

Sallie Mitchell with a murmured, "Thanks old girl!" stuffed the bill into her bag.

The car took them to the corner designated by Gertie. There the two girls alighted and dismissed the chauffeur. They walked up Fifth Avenue several

(*Continued on page 29*)

Dead Men's Diamonds

A tale of mystification and thrills.

By LYON MEARSON

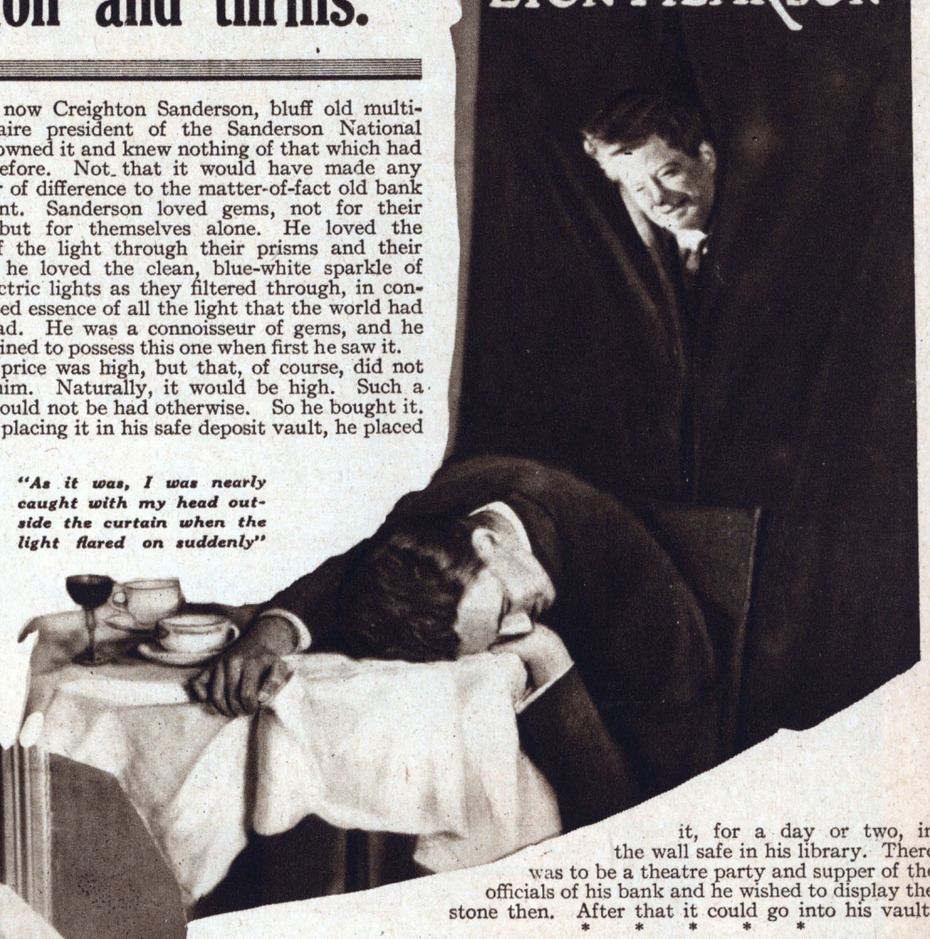
THE day after Creighton Sanderson came into possession of the great diamond from the diadem of the ill-fated Czar, something peculiar happened in his home. Yet, anyone who knew the history of the blazing, blue-white gem could have told him that its ownership would not be unattended by unexplained circumstances, set with an occasional tragedy.

The first owner had been an Englishman who had mined it in the early South African days. Three days later his body was found in the brush, horribly disfigured. The diamond was gone. It did not turn up until some years had passed. This time it appeared in Australia in the possession of a high government official, who had bought it for thirty thousand pounds from a nomad who refused to give his name. This official took the boat for England the next day—and the day after that the boat caught fire. Almost everybody was saved—and most of the luggage—as it was a slow fire. When the excitement had died down there was one name among the missing. It was the erstwhile owner of the unlucky diamond.

Two years passed before it turned up again—in India. There was disaster and tragedy there, too, and so its career continued. And wherever it appeared, there also appeared murder and sudden death, and stark, naked, grim doom. The gem came into the possession of the late Czar two months before his death, and was set into his crown. In two months he had lost his crown and his life.

And now Creighton Sanderson, bluff old multi-millionaire president of the Sanderson National Bank, owned it and knew nothing of that which had gone before. Not that it would have made any manner of difference to the matter-of-fact old bank president. Sanderson loved gems, not for their value but for themselves alone. He loved the play of the light through their prisms and their facets; he loved the clean, blue-white sparkle of the electric lights as they filtered through, in concentrated essence of all the light that the world had ever had. He was a connoisseur of gems, and he determined to possess this one when first he saw it.

The price was high, but that, of course, did not deter him. Naturally, it would be high. Such a stone could not be had otherwise. So he bought it. Before placing it in his safe deposit vault, he placed it, for a day or two, in the wall safe in his library. There was to be a theatre party and supper of the officials of his bank and he wished to display the stone then. After that it could go into his vault.



"As it was, I was nearly caught with my head outside the curtain when the light flared on suddenly"

* * * * *

Yvonne Sanderson feared and disliked the man at first sight. In the first place there was something cruel, something wrong, in his dead-black eyes, which she could have sworn appeared, at first glance, to be Oriental slits. Even now, when she looked at him again, the suggestion remained, though there was nothing sallow about his features. And those high cheekbones. Probably had Tartar blood in him, an offspring of the boundary where Europe meets the East, she mused. The eyes had no appearance of depth to them; they were flat and the black of them was simply the absence of all color, yet ,to her, there was something leering, something implacable and snake-like about him. And then, what business had he here, in the Sanderson house? That in itself was suspicious.

He had asked for her father. In the absence of her father he had inquired for her, and thus gained admission. She had received him in the small drawing-room downstairs, adjoining her father's library. He seemed well-bred and courteous enough, with ever so faint a tinge of foreign accent, but he seemed to have no adequate business there.

SHE regarded him coldly. "You were saying—" He smiled, just as coldly, glancing slowly about the room, his all-inclusive gaze missing nothing. "I wasn't saying anything—yet. I wonder what time Mr. Sanderson will be back?" He looked at her inquiringly.

"I really couldn't say. You asked for me—if your business is with him, I hardly think I can——"

"Well, in a way, my business was with him. But I thought that, being his daughter, you might—awfully nice place you have here," he broke off short, peculiarly, as he rose and walked carelessly about the room, missing nothing. She rose too. There was something about his manner, about his actions,

(Continued on page 20)

"The lights flashed out for five seconds. When they flashed on again——" but read the rest yourself—you won't put it down until you have read the last word

"You fool," he muttered, grasping her roughly. "I'll——"

Without A Soul

The old builder, who of all the human beings on the earth was spared by the Robots, seeks in vain to find the hidden secret of life

Helena trying to find a soul in the stolid mechanism of a Robot

THE most fantastic melodrama shown in a New York theater in years was recently produced at the historic Garrick.

It is "R. U. R." by Karel Capek, the three enigmatic initials representing the trade-mark name of manufactured human beings.

These synthetic people, turned out as mechanically as Fords, furnish in the play, not only a sardonic indictment of modern civilization and its tendencies, but also a series of bizarre thrills, of *outre* sensations, and amazing grotesqueries that combined make an evening of untiring pleasure.

The most delightful feature of the drama is that while it deals
it is so clever
from the first
spectators are
very end.

This is a sup
begins we are
the utterly in
almost as quic
able as one's
opening scene
Rossum's Uni

Murder without mercy is the deliberate plan of the invading Robots once they have found their souls. The disastrous climax of R. U. R.

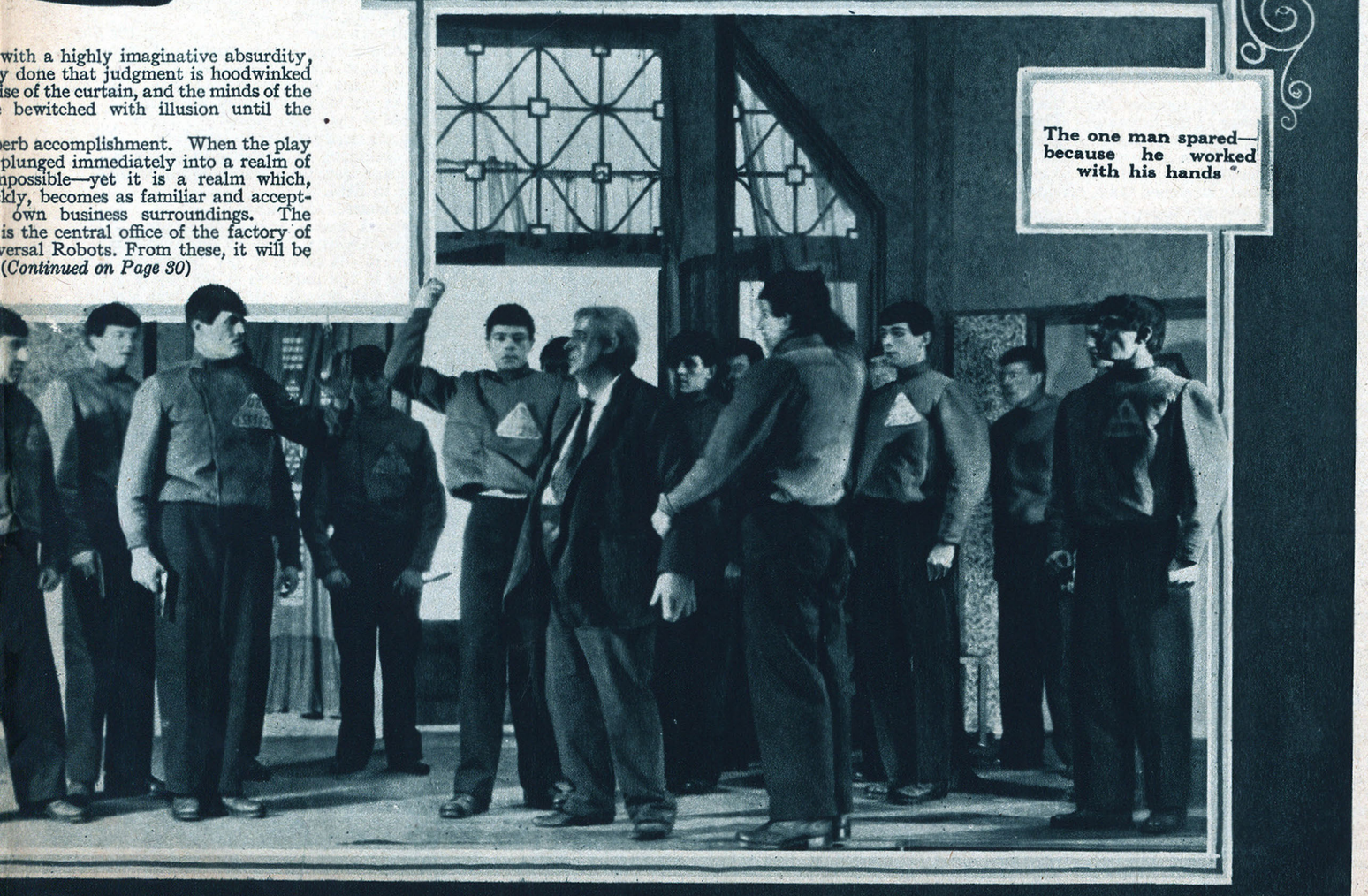
By SVENGALI

The new Adam and the new Eve find a strange happiness as they come face to face

with a highly imaginative absurdity, y done that judgment is hoodwinked ise of the curtain, and the minds of the bewitched with illusion until the

erb accomplishment. When the play plunged immediately into a realm of npossible—yet it is a realm which, kly, becomes as familiar and accept- own business surroundings. The is the central office of the factory of versal Robots. From these, it will be

(*Continued on Page 30*)



The one man spared—because he worked with his hands

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH A GHOST

(Continued from Page 11)

on a little song which had greatly captured my imagination. As I reached the corner of Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, the lights in the traffic tower were changing. From mellow gold, their illumination blinked into bloody scarlet, and last, to envious green; a deep and gloating green, that gashed the velvety grey of twilight and beckoned the homing workers east and west across the boulevard.

I had stopped in a tobacco shop to buy a supply of evening cigars. Tucking them in my upper left vest pocket, I tossed two quarters clinkingly on the glass top of the showcase, and hurried through the door.

With detectable distinctness, the entire incident remains in my mind. I made an invariable practice of returning to my suburban boarding house on the 5.23 out of Grand Central Station. On this particular evening I was already a bit late, and I was anxious to reach the opposite corner before the signal lamps should change again and the traffic tides shift north and south.

As I scurried through the sidewalk crowds, I nearly upset a bawling cripple and his pile of evening papers. Shouting an apology over my shoulder, I was about to hasten across the avenue, when a hand seized my wrist in a detaining clasp.

I turned and saw that a woman was accosting me. My first sensation was one of annoyance, because I was being delayed. My second impression was that I ought to recognize the lady, but that I had forgotten her.

She was tall, full breasted, statuesque, voluptuous. Her cape-like costume of marine blue, the crimson plumage of her hat, her golden hair, and the warm coloring of her cheeks and lips, gave her a charm of peculiar and vivid vitality. She was the kind of a woman who leaves a trail of staring men and envious women behind her, as she approaches her table in a restaurant.

I remember especially that I thought her hat was beautiful.

"Mr. Blair?" she asked eagerly. Her voice was deep and clear, and darkly colored with vivid music.

"Yes," I admitted, a bit dazedly. "Yes, I am Mr. Blair. And, er—"

AT that instant, a bell sounded from the gaunt tower in the center of the crossings. The giant policeman near the car tracks raised a glistening whistle to his lips and blew a warning blast. The green light surrendered to red, and that to glowing yellow; north and south streamed taxis, private cars, and busses of gold and green.

We were forced back on the sidewalk. The magnificent stranger still clung to my arm.

"I am Etta Trent. Have you forgotten me, Mr. Blair?"

Immediately I recalled her. She was the widow of one of my friends who had served with me in France. His death was extraordinary. I had always believed he committed suicide during an engagement, a few days before the armistice. He had a secret sorrow. I had called on Mrs. Trent, when our company was sent home. Strange that she remembered me so well. It seemed that she was having some difficulty with the government. She wanted to bring home her husband's body. I had been his captain, and she thought my influence would help. She was overjoyed at our chance encounter. Wouldn't I assist her?

I promised, there on the sidewalk, in front of the tobacco shop, while the violet dusk darkened into the deep purple of early evening.

After that I saw Etta Trent frequently. There was a quality of bold and voluptuous appeal in her; a seductive allurement in every movement of her body. Her eyes were blue, and the vacancy of their stare impressed me as mysterious. I considered her a very remarkable woman, and I was pleased to help her.

I saw a great deal of her. I called at her home at nights to go over the details of our negotiations with Washington. The oftener I called, the less we talked of the business. We thought no more about it. My friend Lieutenant Trent still sleeps in a French grave.

One night I blurted out a proposal, and she willingly agreed to marry me. I remember a distinct and leaden sense of disappointment when for the first time I pressed my lips against her full-blown, sensuous mouth. I wondered why a long-remembered, dearly treasured thrill was missing—the thrill that mesmerized my senses on the only other occasion when I had kissed a girl. That had been at a child's birthday party, years before. Then I angrily trampled down my disappointment, and fancied I had crushed it.

I should have admitted that psychic objection. At least I should have given my soul the courtesy of a hearing; of entertaining its doubts and prejudice. But my mind and body were under the spell of Etta's physical glamor.

We were married two months later.

For the first few weeks of our honeymoon I was astonishingly pleased. New and unsuspected delights came to me like an initiation. I rejoiced as a strong man with his bride. Etta's love was supremely passionate and possessive. Utterly virtuous, she poured over me such an excess of incalescent ardor and devotion as startled and sometimes frightened me. After a few months her love had become a tyranny.

When I returned to my piano, and assigned long, glad hours to my musical composition, she became fretful and impatient. If I withdrew from her a single hour, she was distressed. She was jealous of my art and drove me to neglect it with all her womanish weapons of tormenting seductiveness, pouting and tears. Every hour she kept me from my music was, for her, an hour gained for love-making. She refused to let me talk to her of my ambitions and aspirations. At first she despised, then abominated my work.

Why should I be ambitious to compose new songs? Weren't there enough already? Why should I be ambitious to do anything but make her happy? These were the questions she flung at me scornfully when I pleaded my work as an excuse to be to myself.

I say excuse advisedly. It was a fact that I was losing the urge to make music. Inspiration seemed to have fled from my piano keys; no melodies danced through my heart as of old. But I began to invent excuses, just to find a little time to myself.

AND then I began deliberately to woo back my prodigal genius. A verse of something that John Burroughs had written was often in my mind, and I was seeking a melody that would translate in terms of emotion the intellectual inspiration of the old poet's words:

"Serene I fold my hands and wait
Nor care for wind, nor tide, nor sea.
I fret not more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me!
"The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea;
Nor time nor space, nor deep nor high
Can keep my own away from me!"

If only I could string those beautiful words, like beaded gold upon a melodic string of music! This was the preoccupation to which I set myself. From the infinite resources of my soul I must draw out the strains that would add the power of spirit to the mighty thought which the metrist had uttered.

But it seemed utterly useless.

I was a slave to the demanding love this yellow-haired Etta chained me with. Unable to elude her, I found myself breaking up spiritually; losing the capacity to conceive a dream, or compose three simple bars of music.

One by one my friends drifted away. Very plainly Etta showed them she did not welcome their visits. She refused to return calls. She was not interested in friends or relatives. All she wanted was I. She clung around me in constant embraces. She demanded thousands, thousands, thousands of kisses. I must make everlasting love to her. I must recite my devotion like a priest telling his beads. I must caress her with unflagging and unresting tenderness.

She wearied me.

Very secretly, at the very bottom of my heart I began to detest Etta. Her blonde hair began to make me recall a yellow taffy which I ate when a boy; ate too much of it, and got a pain in my stomach. Her blue eyes reminded me always of the vacancy of her intellect, which I had mistaken for mystery. She was a stupid woman, my wife, Etta. She was interested in loving me, and in nothing else in the world. If I tried to read her a beautiful book, she would tear it from my grasp and throw it out the window. Then she would purse her full, red, wet lips and croon:

"Come kiss me! Come kiss me!"

I had months of that. Months of her passionate tyranny over me. I could not dream of escaping. I was like a prisoner behind invisible bars. But the hate which began at the bottom of my heart rose like a tide and overflowed. After the first year I loathed her.

I was married to the most loving woman in the world and I did not know how to get rid of her.

Then, gradually, I found a means of escape. My own thoughts were a refuge. In them I would find solace from her eternal plaguing of me with outstretched arms and inviting lips. After she fell asleep at nights, I would commune with my own thoughts.

"She lies when she says she loves me," I would tell myself, in the loneliness of my waking hours, while she slept beside me. "She loves this hulking frame of mine, and to possess that she would destroy my immortal soul; crush my yearning to create; blot out my dreams."

And then I began to wonder about her first husband; my old friend Trent, who, they told me, had shot himself furing a fight with the Germans. He had not been willing to wait to be killed. Why? Already rumors had come down the lines that an armistice was near. Trent had gone through battle after battle like a charmed man. Did he fear to be sent home to his wife? Was that why he had killed himself?

I TURNED and looked upon the prostrate form of my bed-fellow with a shiver of suspicion.

My wife was not such a lovely object when she slept. I would look at her and shudder. Then her mouth was open, with her full lips widely parted, exposing her teeth. Her cheeks would be ruddily flushed, and her breath would make a gutteral noise. I would turn away from her in repulsion, and busy my mind with beautiful images.

I loved those secret thoughts, often so near to waking dreams. It became my nightly practice to indulge in them. Memories would come to soothe my tortured mind; of valleys wrapped in a misty melancholy; of quiet pools in which the bare limbs of trees were reflected against a leaden sky; of tumbling surf, crashing in boisterous play upon white and drifting sands.

A saying from a book I had been recently reading, in such spare moments as Etta permitted, recurred often during those silent meditations:

"We desire what we imagine; we will what we desire, and at last we create what we will!"

I wondered if that were possible. Desire! The trouble was my desire was only negative. That is I was not conscious of desiring anything at all, except an escape from the intolerable requirement of making love to Etta.

Except, of course, my music!

Objectively, I mean, I had no desire. Never once had I consciously formed a desire in thought. Lying there, in the silence of my bedchamber, my eyes gloating in the darkness at the joy of simply being awake with myself, while Etta was sleeping. I would let my thoughts wander as they would in aimless frolic. Sometimes I could almost fancy that Etta was away. In the joy of that little bit of freedom, I could not definitely organize a desire, even for my music.

And then, one night, an extraordinary impression came to me.

I felt as if I were not alone. I mean that I had the singular sensation of companionship, as if the darkness and the silence were shared with me by some waking consciousness.

So real was the feeling that I turned in my bed. Was Etta awake? Could she be lying there awake, without speaking? I could not believe it. She never lay awake without speaking. She is intolerably loquacious. I bent over her inquiringly. She was lying with her head upon her left arm. Her hair was disarranged, and she was breathing deeply, stodgily. It was not Etta.

Yet the impression of not being alone persisted. I felt the certain nearness of another presence, in the room. Intently I listened. Was there a burglar in the house? The suspense quickly got on my nerves. I leaped out of bed and turned on the lights.

I saw no one else in the room. Not satisfied, I made a search of the entire house. But the closest examination of the premises, in which all the servants assisted, yielded no clue. At its conclusion, my impression was stronger than ever; it had reached the proportions of a conviction.

In the light of what I know now, I realize that this precipitate search for a prowling intruder delayed for several months what eventually came to pass. This incident occurred in February, and it

was not until the soft spell of April lay over the earth like perfume, that it was repeated.

When it did return, however, it was an infinitely more definite and tangible phenomenon.

AGAIN I was lying awake. The hour was well after midnight, and our sleeping room was dark and utterly soundless, save for the sound of my wife's breathing. Of a sudden, I was conscious of a strange, warm thrill. This time I *knew* there was someone in the room, and the fact of knowing it affected me most oddly. In the presence of that unseen guest, a door seemed to open within me; a door, barred up and bolted, ponderously locked for so many years, swung wide open.

Feelings, sensations, delicious tremors of emotion, long imprisoned, rushed gladly out. The sense—the bewildering and intoxicating sense—of sheer beauty flooded me with pleasure. I was neither startled nor afraid. I was unreasonably and inexplicably happy!

I lay looking out into the darkness, perfectly still, my senses like an orchestra in the ecstasies of a symphony. What was about to befall me? I dared not guess. I had lost the power or capacity for thought. I merely waited.

It then seemed to me that the darkness parted, like velvet curtains drawn by an invisible hand. No light came; only the shadows seemed to grow transparent. I could see without the aid of light. This is difficult to convey; the sensation was utterly unlike anything I have ever experienced. I looked through the darkness and saw clearly; I was looking at the fully disclosed figure of a girl with red hair.

The lovely surprise of her is beyond all words. Only music could recapture her shining beauty. In that first miraculous moment when she disclosed herself to me, an artlessly beguiling passage from a Chopin fantasie seemed to sing through all my nerves—yearning, tender, sweet.

What can it mean to eyes that have never beheld her to read mere words that spell out lightness, the gauzy texture of a fairy's whimsy, graceful and altogether lovely? How shall I put on paper the divine glory of her oval face, the lambent refulgence of her smile?

For she was smiling down upon me! Smiling, while from her eyes of unfathomable blue came a steady glance of such poignant sympathy that my own eyes were wet with the tears of joy. I felt choked, delirious with her beauty and her smile.

She made a pretty gesture with her hands. They were such small hands, so unbelievably white and graceful. She seemed to be greeting me with a gesture of friendly comradeship.

I tried to call to her, but my lips would not come apart, nor could I summon sound from my throat. Every muscle seemed unresponsive. I saw her toss her head; her red lips moved as if in utterance, and then—

She melted into the darkness and was gone!

The bed was groaning beneath Etta's weight as she turned in her sleep. At once, with a fierce anger, I understood. A rage of rebellion swept through me. I could have shaken my wife in a frenzy of punishment. She—this gross, physical Etta, this tyrannous, soulless wife that was mine—she had stirred and threatened to awaken, and my phantom guest had fled.

The next morning I convinced myself that I had dreamed. But what a dream! The memory of it gave me recurring little thrills of ecstatic delight. I could think of nothing else, and braving all of Etta's tricks, I brooded through the day over the piano keys, now playing Chopin, now improvising lacy, delicately tinted themes and rich, rare harmonies that expressed the beauty of that wonderful girl in the night.

I was impatient for night to return; eager to dream that dream again, if only I might see that wondrous apparition once more. And when at last I lay again beneath the coverlets, staring out at the gloom which filled the room, still convinced that I had dreamed, I feverishly tried to woo sleep to my expectant eyes.

But the hours crept on, and sleep did not come. The same hour which had reigned when I saw the girl of my vision returned, and I was still awake.

"The Hour of Doom"
in
Next Week's MIDNIGHT

AS if the hour were a tryst, a time appointed for a sacred communion between us, she came to me again. It was not a dream! My pulses beat a thunderous challenge to my brain, pounding home the amazing proof that it was not a dream. I was awake. In the face of all that your pompous scientists may argue and declaim, I was awake! Etta was asleep; deep in her slumbers, but I was acutely awake and aware, and I saw her come to me like an angel out of a cloud.

At first she appeared, just beside the bed, weaving about her rosy form a gauzy veil of soft violet grey. It clung about her like a drapery of twilight mist.

Again came that wonderful smile, so full of sympathy and understanding. I smiled up at her from my pillow. The desire to call to her had left me, replaced by a feeling of security and peace, and a strange new sense of power. Somehow I knew that she could address me, and though no sound came from her arched and tempting lips, yet I knew I could receive her thoughts.

"Madeline!" was the thought I heard. "My name is Madeline!"

"Beautiful name! Sweet name! Dear name!" I mentally exclaimed, and she smiled, her eyes drooped, and blushes coraled her cheeks. She had received my thought—a feeling of god-like power seemed to gush up within me like a fountain.

"Shall I dance?"

Her head was turned inquiringly, her hands lifted in a gesture of poised grace, as this thought impinged upon my consciousness.

"Please! Please! Please!" I cried in my mind.

Such a delicious sight my tired eyes had never before looked upon. As my answer reached her, she drew back, the darkness closing in around her like an iris, until only her face was visible. I feared she was about to fade from my view. But no! It was as if she had yielded her form to the ministrations of unseen attendants. Presently she emerged into full vision once more—attired in a fashion two hundred years old.

In quick and graceful succession she danced for me the dances of many times and many places—her garments changing as the dances changed, while from very far off—an almost illimitable distance—came the soft music of muted strings.

I saw her first in a stately, old-fashioned pavan, moving through its waltzing rythm in her gown of Colonial times, shimmering with bits of living silver. Again I beheld her in a Spanish dance, whirling and tapping her little feet imperiously in a love *bolero* that suddenly was transformed into an arduous saraband. Across our bedroom floor she glided, weaving vivid patterns with a trailing scarf of red and yellow, its black, quivering fringes a-tremble with the staccatto chant of distant castanets. Her pink and supple form undulated to the pulsing beat of far away drums and tambourines, and the soft, whispering tunes of plucked and amorous guitars. At last, freed from all raiment except her veil, gauzy as a spider's web, she whirled and flitted and pirouetted, rosy and ethereal. In the giddiest moment of her dance she paused, poised on her toes and wafted me a farewell with her little hand, while a nimbus closed in about her, embracing her form until even her smile had vanished and I was alone again.

This time Etta sat up stiffly in bed, rubbing her swollen eyes and gaping. Her voice was thick with sleep as she asked me in sodden suspicion what was wrong.

"There is nothing wrong, Etta," I answered her crossly. "Go back to sleep!"

"Kiss me!" she pouted, throwing her arms around my neck.

THE next day I was forced to ponder very seriously over these clandestine experiences. For all of my artistic promptings, I am naturally a practical man. I began to cross-examine myself.

Did I actually believe that a beautiful red-haired woman came to me out of the air, at night, when Etta had gone to sleep?

Did I not realize that such a thing was completely absurd and impossible?

I did realize that such a thing was impossible. Yet I did know that the impossible had happened.

It had certainly happened, unless I was losing my sanity. I was forced to question my mental status. If so, Etta had driven me mad. I was conscious of no particular symptom; I felt entirely normal, yet I did insist to myself that I had actually witnessed those two visits after midnight.

This was what sent me to the office of the famous doctor of the mind. I urged him to apply every test that he knew to determine the state and quality of my brain. He dismissed me with the blandiloquent assurance that I was one hundred per cent sane.

What, then, was the explanation?

I knew—and know—nothing of the mysteries o the soul. None of my time had ever been wasted—or ever will be wasted—in a pursuit of occultism or metaphysics. I have an inherited, ingenital distaste for such stuff.

But in the disturbed condition of my mind I resolved to call upon an old friend living in Sheridan Square; a man who, I felt, might help me. He is what is called a mystic; that is, he does not accept the conclusions of orthodox science, religion, or philosophy but tries to find truth on his own account. How old he is I do not know; he is at least twice my age.

After leaving the doctor, I boarded a Fifth Avenue bus and rode down to Washington Square. A few minutes' walk brought me to his door, and I was lucky enough to find him in.

Although he represses all emotions rigidly, he permitted himself the luxury of being glad to see me.

"Half an hour later and you would have found me gone," he told me. "I am taking my wife and daughter to the art exhibition this afternoon. That is too important to be put off. Can you tell me your business in half an hour? I know it is important, for I get the psychic vibrations of your excitement!"

There you had the man! The kind of fellow who accepts the most impossible fancies as scientific truths. He actually believed himself when he said he could interpret my soul vibrations!

"I am very much puzzled," I confessed, "and I want you to tell me what is happening!"

Not a single detail did I omit in relating my experiences. All of it I poured out into his sympathetic ear, though he betrayed not the slightest surprise at my narrative. When I had finished, he took me by the hand and said:

"The doctor you went to see had more sense than most of his brand ever reach. He was perfectly right. You are sane. And you do need a red-haired girl. I am afraid, my son, that I understand more of this queer business than I am permitted to reveal to you!"

Bah! I felt enraged. More mumbo-jumbo! That was the way with all mystics. When they couldn't explain, they talked nonsense.

Such were my thoughts.

"I am not talking nonsense," he broke in evenly, as if he had read my mind. "There may be several explanations. Perhaps—but there! The minx! Why should I try to explain what cannot be explained? Only, my son, it may be that your true mate is reaching out for you—a living woman projecting her astral body to your room. But be assured if that is so, your own will come to you!"

An extraordinary sensation gripped me at his words. He had voiced the very spirit of the poet's lines that had formerly so impressed me— The verse for which I had sought so long, so vainly, for the music.

"Good-bye, my son," he said kindly. "Perhaps we shall meet again. Meanwhile—I have promised the folks that art exhibition!"

I left him, feeling better. At least, he had not derided me. And he had served me a good purpose, in the perhaps accidental choice of his language.

"Your own will come to you!"

I resolved to find the music for those words—to finish that self appointed task; to create, in spite of Etta and her love.

THE remainder of the day was unpleasant. Etta was in a nasty mood. It was as if she suspected something; we quarreled bitterly, and the crushing sensation of defeat gathered in my heart. I looked forward for night to come, secure in the belief that in the dark hours my lovely vision would return.

To my blackest disappointment, she did not return. Not that night, nor the next, nor yet the next. I lay awake all night waiting, but in vain. I prayed, my heart wildly calling for the phantom that had evoked real love in my breast at last, but all to no purpose.

(Continued on page 22)

"The Rope of Death"
in
Next Week's MIDNIGHT

DEAD MEN'S DIAMONDS

(Continued from Page 00)

that she mistrusted. It was a strange sort of visit, anyway.

"What's in there?" he asked courteously, as though it was just to make conversation. "The library?"

She nodded. "Your business——"

"Ah, yes, my business," he broke in. "I'd like to ask you—I say, if you don't mind, I would like to see the library. I've always had a curiosity about rich men's libraries—" he was walking to the library door as he spoke.

It occurred to Yvonne that he must not go into the library. She mistrusted him—was sure now that there was something wrong. And in the library wall safe rested the immensely valuable diamond that her father had purchased the day before. With a nonchalant, yet none the less swift movement, she contrived to place herself at the door.

"If you will come back later, when my father is in——"

"No, the present will do just as well," he said, smiling a twisted smile. "I'd like to take a look at your library——"

"You can't go in there now," she said, having definitely stationed herself at the library door, blocking his way. "It's my father's private room——"

He advanced upon her. "Nonsense," he snapped, "I'm not going to do the room any harm. I only want——"

She shook her head. He fixed her with his flat, black eyes, which suddenly seemed to have lost their flatness in bottomless black depths with lights glowing deep in their caverns, like candles shining at the bottom of twin wells. He seemed to be sucking the very soul out of her by simply gazing at her intently. She was speechless. She shook her head again.

He smiled. He reached forward to take her hand from the door. She shrank back, the fear deep into her heart. Her flesh crawled at the very touch of the man, yet she did not give way. "You fool," he muttered, grasping her roughly. "I'll——"

"Did you call, miss?" came the suave, smooth tones of Carlson, the butler.

A prayer of thanksgiving went up from Yvonne. Both she and the visitor straightened up instantly.

"This gentleman is just going, Carlson," she said evenly.

"Very good, miss," bowed Carlson. He accompanied the strange caller to the door. A moment later the iron door clanged on him.

* * * * *

HER father was inclined to make light of the incident when he came in for dinner. He was in high good humor over the acquisition of the gem.

"Just a crank visitor, Yvonne," he said. "Don't let it worry you. I'm used to them; we get lots of them at the bank——"

"But I think it was more than that, father," she protested. "I'm sure it has something to do with that new diamond of yours. He was so anxious to get into that room that——"

"There, there, dear. You're all upset. Come out to the theatre with me after dinner and forget about it." And so it was left.

When the butler reported to them that the car was about to roll up to the door, Yvonne and her father made their way out of the house and down the high brownstone stoop. At the bottom they stood for a few moments and waited for the car, which seemed to be delayed. As they stood there Sanderson related to his daughter the details of a little surprise he was planning to spring on his colleagues at the supper on the morrow, at which time he was to show them his new gem.

Then the car stopped in front of the door, they got in, and drove away. As they did so a silent, cat-like figure stole out of the area-way just beneath them and blended with the darkness.

It was after one when they returned, having loitered over a late supper with a congenial crowd. Sanderson let himself in—having told the butler not to wait up for them. They had to go through the drawing room to get to their stairs.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Yvonne, paralyzed into a static position.

He followed her look. The door of his library was open, and through the open door they could see that the place had been upset. Recovering herself, Yvonne darted into the room, her father close behind her. The wall safe was wide open, and its contents had been strewn around the room by someone who, evidently, had been in a great hurry.

"The diamond!" she staccatoed. "He's been here." On her knees before the safe she threw open the little drawer where the diamond had rested.

"It's gone."

Her father smiled. "I guess not," he muttered, and put his hand into his vest pocket. When he withdrew it, there sparkled a great gem between his thumb and his forefinger.

"I took the precaution to take it with me," he smiled.

NO clue was found to the safe-breaker. He had entered, easily enough, by jimmying a street-level window. The safe itself, old and small as it was, had presented no great difficulty, and his movements had been heard by none of the servants.

Yvonne, howver, was frightened, not so much for the diamond as for her father, and implored him not to take it with him to the after-theatre supper the next night. There was something about it that seemed terrible to her, something evil. She hated the sight of it now, and probably that was because in her mind she connected it with the evil-eyed visitor of the afternoon. It seemed watched over by the powers of darkness. It was more than a gem to her, it was a living thing, boding no good to the possessor.

Her father pooh-poohed the idea, however, and carried out his original plan. Nine-tenths of a collector's joy comes from being able to exhibit his collection, from gloating over the envy that is sure to attend the exhibition of any valued piece. Sanderson was not going to be robbed of his little gloat. He had paid a vast sum of money for it, and he intended to have it.

* * * * *

Grouped around the supper table the next night, at Colazzi's, on Sixth Avenue, the party was going nicely. The show had been good, and now, at the end of the meal, the party of seven was feeling the delightful relaxation and well-being that comes after an enjoyable evening and a well prepared meal. At the head of the table was Sanderson, distinguished and witty. With him were the six other officers of the bank.

"And now—" began Milgrim, the cashier, glancing at Sanderson.

"And now, gentlemen," Sanderson took up the cue neatly, "I have something I want you to see. One of the finest diamonds in the world, which has just come into my possession. They say there's a history attached to it," he smiled. "That may be—there's more history attached to it now." He told them of the attempt at robbery—and of his daughter Yvonne's strange visitor of yesterday afternoon. As he spoke he rose and locked the door from the inside.

"They usually manufacture history for these big gems, Creighton," put in portly Craig, the first vice-president. "No big gem is complete without an occasional murder—and if there is no murder handy they usually supply one with the bill of sale."

"I don't think it's being done this season," beamed Sanderson. "Anyway, here it is." He took out the gem and rolled it on the table in front of him.

A gasp went up from the company.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Milgrim. "That's a beauty."

It was. Under the overhead lights, it lay on the table like a living ball of blue-white flame, almost as large as a thumbnail, and as thick as it was broad. Vivid with the playing lights it was, flashing and sparkling as though charged with electric fire.

"They say there's no such thing as a perfect diamond, gentlemen," said Sanderson. "That every diamond has some sort of flaw; but I can assure you that, while this gem is not as large as some, it is as nearly perfect a diamond as the world has ever seen. If there is a flaw in it anywhere, it is so small that it would require a high powered glass to discover it."

Milgrim picked up the gem, and to the accompaniment of talk it went around the table, from hand to hand.

A deep, mellow, resonant clock, somewhere in a neighboring church, boomed the opening strokes of midnight. A sudden hush, for some unexplained reason, fell on the assemblage. It was as if a great hand had swept aside their petty conversation and was preparing them for something big, for something that was not of this living world.

One. . . . Two. . . . Three. . . .

Suddenly the lights went out. Completely. Finally. It was not so much darkness as it was the entire absence of all light in the world. As if some supernatural power had sucked out the light from the room.

"Well, I'll be——" came the surprised voice of Craig. The others were silent for the moment.

Into the tense darkness, velvet black, came the crackling of a tiny blue flame. Once. . . . twice . . . three times came the living spark of flashing blue.

There was a tired sigh in the room and the tinkling sound of a breaking glass. As suddenly as the light had gone, it returned, flooding the room garishly, blindingly. They sat there blinking in the quick, disconcerting glare, staring at what they saw, their tongues thick in their dry, flanneled mouths, and the blood pounding thick in their temples. Milgrim found his voice first.

"Oh, my God!" he said softly.

Before them at his end of the table, head among the glasses and plates, lay the inert, immovable form of their president, Sanderson.

And even the dullest of them could tell, without moving, that Sanderson would never breathe again. Creighton Sanderson had looked upon his last diamond.

* * * * *

CRAIG was first to recover the use of his limbs. He was at the quiet figure's side in an instant, feeling for his heart. No movement—no slightest flutter could he discern. By now the others were crowding around.

A slightly burned spot on the left temple, no bigger than half of a dime—that was the only mark of violence of any sort they could discover.

It was Craig who spoke their thoughts finally.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it looks like a case for the police to me."

The others nodded. "I think so, too," assented one and another. "How about Wolcott?" asked Milgrim. Wolcott, of Headquarters, was a special friend of theirs, a celebrated detector of criminals.

"The very man," said Craig. "He may be able to make something of this terrible affair." He shuddered.

Milgrim telephoned to Wolcott's home, during a dead, dazed silence. When he put down the receiver of the wall telephone, he faced the others.

"Of course, there is no suspicion on any of us," he said, "but I rather think it would be just as well if we did not leave the room—any one of us. The door has been locked—you remember, poor Sanderson—" his voice almost broke, "poor Sanderson locked it. I think we should leave things exactly as they are. Wolcott says he'll be here in ten minutes—his car was at the door and speed laws mean nothing to him."

It was Craig who unlocked the door to Wolcott when he arrived. A keen, youngish man, prematurely grey, his sharp, inclusive eyes took in the room and its occupants in one all-inclusive glance. He lingered a bit longer over the silent form bent over the head of the table, and then looked away.

"Am I the first one in the room since——" he nodded to the figure.

(Continued on page 28

"OUTSIDE THE VERDICT"

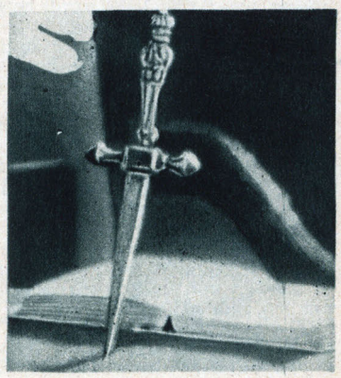
by

D. R. Lane

A story that will possess you completely in next week's MIDNIGHT

The Dagger of Hearts

By T. Howard Kelly



Who Stole the Body?

The body, stabbed to the heart, was there before him. When he looked again it was gone. Where could it have gone? Who could have taken it?

AS Montayne Hanford took a step through the tapestried doorway leading from the great hall of the Olcott mansion into Professor Richard Olcott's private study, he uttered a startled cry, and jerked his head and body back as if a rattlesnake had suddenly struck him. His ruddy face paled; his strong brown hands trembled; his eyes revealed the shock and fear that was making him stand stock still in his tracks like a frozen statue. Not a muscle in his powerful young body twitched as he gazed upon a sight that sent paralyzing chills into his blood.

At the head of a long book-laden library table sat white-haired Professor Olcott, a cross-hilted dagger protruding from a great scarlet stained place above his heart. Dumbly, Hanford's eyes took in the fact that the aged historian was strapped to his chair, and that a white gag of coarse cloth had been swathed around the lower portion of his jaw.

A few seconds passed.

Slowly, but surely, Hanford rallied his shocked nerves. The chill began to leave his veins. His leg muscles gradually came back to life. He took an uncertain step toward the murdered professor.

Suddenly the hall telephone rang sharply.

Pausing again, the man stood irresolute before the table of tragedy, undecided as to what he should do. The phone bell continued to ring. There was an insistency about the ringing that swayed Hanford away from the dagger's victim. Turning upon his heel he rushed out of the library.

"It must be Jane," he muttered, hurrying through the hall. "My God! Do I dare tell her what has happened to her uncle?" He asked himself this question as he picked up the receiver with nervous fingers.

"Hel-lo," his voice half-quaked into the transmitter.

"Monty—'Lo dear," came the response.

"Jane," he groaned inwardly, recognizing the voice of his fiancée, Jane Olcott, niece of the man he had just found murdered in his own home.

"I will be home in a few minutes. Is dinner going to be served at seven?" came her question over the wire.

"I—I am afraid not Jane——" he began, but was cut short by the girl.

"Monty—what is wrong—Your voice—You sound like a ghost—My dear, are you ill—has——?"

"No—no—not that dear—your uncle—he has been stabbed—killed——" he broke in, his voice betraying the fear that surged within him.

A sob, and the sound of a muffled cry reached Hanford. In that moment he realized he should not have told Jane yet. The shock of such a statement over the phone was too much!

"Jane—Jane," he called wildly into the mouthpiece. But there was no answer to his cry. Frantically he clicked the hook up and down as he called her name again and again.

After what seemed frenzied hours an operator came in on the line and told him his party must have left the phone. Hanford, after explaining the situation as clearly as his excited brain would permit, found out that Jane's call had been put in from a pay station booth of the Biltmore Hotel.

"Flash the Biltmore operator and tell her a girl has fainted in one of the booths. Quick——" he begged.

Five minutes passed before the Biltmore desk informed him Miss Jane Olcott had been found unconscious in a telephone box, and that she had been revived and was being sent to her uncle's home in a very nervous condition. Upon receiving this information Hanford called the outside operator back and asked her to send the police to the Olcott mansion at once.

Then he hurried back to the library, determined to ascertain if the poor old professor was past mortal aid. Although he was still trembling from shock the former Yale football star had himself in good hand as he re-entered Olcott's study.

But, his control lasted only a few, brief moments.

HIS brain suddenly seemed to snap as, upon entering the library, he saw that the Professor was not in the chair of death at the head of the table. Like a man careening into madness Hanford staggered towards the table, his eyes unable to leave a sight almost as sinister and terrible as the one he had witnessed only a few minutes before when he came upon the stabbed Professor.

A bloody dagger quivered upon the end of the table close to where the body of the old historian had been strapped in the chair. With palsied fingers Hanford picked up the dagger. As the human gore stained them a vivid scarlet he dropped the keen blade that was shaped like a miniature scimatar. It stuck in the soft wood of the table, and gleamed like a thing of hate and revenge, speckled here and there with red blots of crime.

The horrified eyes of Hanford lingered on that dagger. He could not take his gaze away from the ugly, menacing picture it made for him. As he studied it, he realized that there was an uncanny sort of coat of arms, or something of that description, on the curved hilt of the knife. At last he made it out. It was a red heart pierced by a dagger which was an exact replica in miniature of the crimson stained one sticking in the table.

Once more his shaking fingers reached out to grasp the sinister blade. But, before they came in contact with it the sound of hurrying footsteps in the hall, the mad clanging of the front door bell, and other unnerving sounds caused him to draw back from the dagger.

Suddenly the room filled with swift, surging shadows. An invisible hand had snapped off the lights leaving the house in total darkness. Groping his way towards the hall Hanford stumbled over a chair. As he picked himself up the lights went on as suddenly as they had popped out. The sound of loud rapping at the door followed immediately with the returning flood of electricity.

"Who is there?" cried Hanford, before turning the lock in the heavy door.

"The police," came the answer.

Quickly he twisted the key and pushed the door open. A uniformed officer and a plainclothes man confronted him.

"What's the trouble here, sir?" asked the policeman at once.

"Come in—I can tell you better after I show you a few things," said Montayne Hanford opening the screen door to admit the officers. "Follow me to Professor's study. That is where I found him stabbed to death——"

"Stabbed!" broke in the two men from headquarters in one voice.

"Yes—Here is the room, gentlemen. Go in," invited the man who was to marry the niece of old Richard Alcott. The patrolman and detective brushed the tapestries aside gingerly and entered the study.

"No murder here," commented the sleuth, looking around for signs of the Professor's body. "Ah! What's that dagger doing there?" he asked, his voice quickening as he beheld the knife. As he spoke, the policeman made a strange noise in his throat and pointed to blood spots on the carpet and the bare floor.

"It's a very mysterious thing on top of being a terrible tragedy," began Hanford in an attempt to explain what he knew about the affair. He went back to the moment he crossed the threshold of the study and found the Professor bound and gagged in his chair with a dagger sticking in his chest. As faithfully as his upset condition would allow, the boy told every detail of the uncanny story.

"You say the Professor's body was gone five or six minutes after you returned from the phone?" asked the detective in a voice that suggested incredulity. Hanford reiterated that such was the case.

THE windows in the room were all found to be down and locked from the inside. There seemed only one way to clear up the mysterious disappearance of the stabbed historian, and that was to trail the blood tracks. The detective followed this trail for five feet. The trail extended one foot inside of the study door leading to the hall. There was not another drop of blood to be found beyond that spot. This doscovery absolutely baffled and confused both of the officers.

"How in thunder did the murdered man—You said he was dead Mr. Hanford, didn't you?" questioned the sleuth.

"Yes—that is—that is—I guess he was dead. He looked it. But, remember I never got close enough to examine him," was the hasty reply.

The two officers exchanged glances. Then Burrows, the plainclothes man went on to wonder how the dead professor ever got out of the room at all, and if he did, how he ever got out without continuing the original blood trail. No one could offer any suggestions that seemed worth while. A discussion of the fact that the lights had been suddenly extinguished, and that there had been strange noises at the door and in the hallway before the arrival of the police only made the mystery grow more entangled. They were floundering in a maze of theories when the front doorbell pealed long and loud.

Answering the summons, Hanford found himself looking into the blanched and terror-stricken face of Jane Olcott. With a piteous little cry she fell into his arms and began to sob. Hanford picked her up easily and carried her into the living room where he placed her on the divan. The others remained in the hall. Alone with the girl he kissed her trembling lips, and held her close against him, trying to sooth and control her as best he could.

"How—How—Oh, Monty!" she sobbed, "How

did it happen. Who would kill my dear uncle——?"

"Shhh, dear. We do not know. It is a very mysterious thing. But, you must try to rest now and not bother about who did it. The police will find out about those things. I will send your maid in at once. I must go back and see if I can help in establishing clues," with these words he kissed his fiancée, and tip-toed out of the dimly-lit living room.

When he approached the group in the hall a man in the uniform of a police captain approached him. The captain was a very large man with sharp, penetrating eyes. Hanford felt that the officer was searching his very soul as he looked into his eyes.

"You are Mr. Hanford who is to marry Miss Jane Olcott? And you are a guest in the house? You found Professor Olcott bound and gagged and apparently murdered in his chair yonder?"

Hanford, dazed by the rapidity of the Captain's words, answered nervously in the affirmative. A feeling of great uneasiness followed in the wake of his declaration, for the eyes of the captain seemed to be piercing him as he spoke.

The police captain heard this with a strange, puzzled look on his face. "Burrows, why should anyone murder Professor Olcott? Establish a motive for the crime, if there was any crime committed?"

"That's what baffles me. He hasn't any known enemies. He is generally liked. He never carries any money with him. There is no evidence of anyone having robbed the place. Its a blank, all right," replied Burrows.

"Would his death do anyone good, financially or otherwise?" insisted the captain, looking at Hanford.

"Well now, Captain, that's something I couldn't say much about as I have never seen his will. Maybe Mr. Hanford here knows something——"

"All I know is this: His will is in favor of his neice. Miss Jane Olcott inherits his estate upon his death," cut in Hanford.

"Suppose she marries? What about the husband? Does he get . . . . er . . . . benefited by the Professor's death?"

Hanford's face flushed a deep scarlet. But he managed to murmur a confused, "not directly."

"Do you know where the Professor was prior to his entering the study?" asked the detective.

"I think," answered Hanford slowly, "the Professor had been down in his museum in the basement. You know he has a place filled with all kind of historical objects, souvenirs, and so forth. He generally spent an hour or so before dinner pottering around with those things."

"Where have the servants been all afternoon?" questioned Captain Boyle.

"I couldn't say. I know nothing much about the servants. You see I have only been visiting here two days, and Miss Olcott tells me the servants are all brand new to this place."

"Ah! Is that so," exclaimed Boyle. "Well let us go down to the museum and look that joint over."

AS the group moved through the hall towards the basement steps Jane Olcott appeared in the doorway of the living room. She was very pale and swayed unsteadily on her feet.

"Monty—Monty," she called. The basement bound party paused to hear what she had to say.

"Monty did you phone me at a quarter of six to call you on the telephone?" she asked.

"No—I did—not, dear. Why do you ask?" asked her fiancée.

"Because I got a call at that time saying it was urgent that I call you at exactly five-forty-five," was the answer.

A look of utter stupefaction and a mazement spread over Montayne Hanford's face. He looked like a man beset with a thousand puzzles.

"That's funny—very, very queer. I certainly did not phone any such message," declared the man.

"Make a note of that, Burrows," commanded Captain Boyle, "come on now let's explore the room Professor was in before he met with murder or whatever befell him."

Led by Hanford the police went down the winding basement stairs. At a huge door Hanford paused. Turning to Boyle, he said:

"I do not know as this room will yield any solutions. No one ever enters it except the Professor. And I am afraid we will have a tough time breaking in. He always keeps it locked securely, according to Miss Olcott."

"Give it a twist, anyhow. You never can tell," commanded Boyle.

Hanford turned the door knob and pushed. The door opened easily.

"Humph!" said Boyle.

"This is strange," muttered Hanford, striking a match to look for a switch button. But, Boyle had already whipped out a flashlight and in a few seconds he had found the button and snapped it on.

The Professor's museum was a vast room cluttered up with all sorts of strange objects. Huge pieces of stone, statues, ancient weapons of war, stuffed animals, and four mummies, besides a collection of many odds and ends.

"Regular pawn shop," exclaimed the plainclothes manistriding over to a desk, "I guess this is where he did most of his work, eh?"

"I think so," answered Hanford.

"You think he was down here prior to the time you found him in his study Mr. Hanford?" asked Boyle.

"As it was his regular custom to do so I presume he was," Monty replied.

"Those stuffed Egyptians are funny looking ducks. The old man must have been strong for this kind of stuff to spend most of his time in the company of these stiffs," declared Burrows studying the mummys which stood upright in their long narrow coffins. Their heads were concealed from view because of a strip of thin boarding at the top of each coffin.

"Those birds have been dead hundreds of years, ain't they?" asked the policeman eyeing one mummy intently.

"Thousands and thousands of years," answered Hanford impressively. A momentary silence reigned after his words.

"My God!" shrieked the big policeman, his voice sounding like a tornado of fear as he backed into a statue, "I swear I saw that dead mummy's hand move——"

"What's that?" snapped Boyle, "saw his hand move?"

EVERY eye was riveted on the mummy as the patrolman answered in the affirmative. There was no doubt in anybody's mind but that his fear was genuine. Fright was manifest in his voice.

"I think you're dreaming Casey," began the Captain.

"Dreamin' nothing, sir. I saw his hand move two inches upwards. And, believe me Cap'n I'm gettin' out this place if we're going to fool with the dead that moves around after being stiff a thousand years."

Ignoring this speech by Casey, the Captain went up to the mummy in question and scrutinized it closely. Swathed in cloths, as it was, there was very little opportunity to discover anything of importance.

"We'll take this mummy and examine it," said Boyle reaching out to lay his hands on the box.

"Good God, Cap'n don't touch it," implored the cop.

"Oh say Casey, I never heard you put on such a show in your life. You're a fine fellow. And you went over the top in France, got wounded, fought like hell afterwards and now—come on buck up," commanded Boyle.

"Faith, it's not in me to handle a thousand-year-old live mummy," came back Casey.

Hesitating no longer, Boyle with the aid of Burrows pulled the upright box out into the middle of the room. "Now gentlemen I am going to see if Casey's imagination got the best of him." With these words the giant police officer thrust his hand into the box and grasped the left arm of the mummy in a vise-like grip.

A blood-curdling cry filled the room. It was a cry at once sinister, foreign and foreboding. Boyle's face turned white. Casey backed out of the room. The detective stood rooted to the floor, as did Hanford.

"That mummy hasn't been dead thousands of years," announced Boyle with trembling lips. "Get your gun out Burrows and stand by. I am going to show you a live mummy."

With these words Boyle took hold of the cloth swathed figure in the coffin and plying all of his great strength literally yanked the mummy out of the box. As the body came out there was a flash of gleaming steel.

Boyle stepped out of the way just in time to avoid being struck by a dagger which, missing its mark, fell to the stone floor with a ringing noise. In a second he was on top of the writhing mummy, pinning him to the floor. Burrows pulled the cloths away as Boyle held him, Hanford and Casey being open-mouthed witnesses of the thrilling happenings.

The mummy turned out to be a live, squirming Egyptian who had three more daggers of the exact kind Hanford had found in the Professor's study. Each deadly weapon had a red heart pierced by a dagger emblazoned upon the hilt. The four men exchanged glances as they found these daggers.

"Professor used to go to Egypt to get things for his museum didn't he?" asked Boyle significantly.

"I think so," answered Hanford.

"Then that explains it to me. On his last trip he got hold of something those Egyptians didn't want him to have. They trailed him to get it back," announced Boyle confidently.

"You think so? Well, not me. This may be a mighty fine piece of murder with this mummy business as a trick," declared Burrows.

"What do you mean?" asked Hanford.

"Just what I said," answered Burrows.

"Come on we'll take this fellow to the station and get an interpreter. Maybe we can pump something out of him. Will you come along Mr. Hanford?" asked Boyle.

"Yes—cer—tainly," replied Hanford uneasily. He started to say he did not want to leave Jane. But on second thought it might be best to go along. Perhaps Burrows would insist, and make a scene.

* * * * *

THE clock in police headquarters tolled off the hour of midnight as a squad of policemen entered the place escorting a distinguished-looking white-haired gentleman of the academic type. The sergeant in charge of the squad approached a door marked private and knocked.

"Come in," cried Captain Boyle.

The sergeant opened the door and motioned the squad to follow him.

"We have found Professor Olcott unharmed sir. He is with us," reported the sergeant.

A strange kind of silence obtained for a moment. Then there was an uproar of exclamations followed by a sob from Jane Olcott, who, spying her old uncle in the midst of the bluecoats, rushed to him and threw her arms around his neck. Hanford also rushed up to the Professor and supported him with his arm as they led the old gentleman to a chair.

With halting words and pale cheeks, Professor Olcott described his ghastly experience of the past few hours. He said that about five o'clock, after entering his study and sitting down to read, he became drowsy and drifted into a stupor of some kind. The next time he awakened he was in a strange house surrounded by several Egyptians who told him everyone thought he had been murdered. They threatened death if he did not return a piece of parchment upon which was written some of the mysteries of an Alexandrian religious sect which was over six thousand years old. Professor Olcott told them he bought the historical paper from an Egyptian in Cario, but promised to return it if they would spare his life.

The Egyptians then told him how they had put their confederates in his house as servants, and that one of their number, disguised as a mummy, had been studying his habits in the museum for several days prior to his abduction. They also said they had chloroformed him and strapped him in the chair with a dagger apparently thrust into his heart. The crafty Egyptians used real human blood in staining the floor and his clothes. Their object, he said, was to cast a veil of mystery over the entire event.

"When you answered that phone, you fell for their hoax, Montayne," said the old man. "I was told how they arranged to have Jane call you at exactly fifteen minutes to five. Then they picked me up and carried me down the rear basement stairs while you were at the phone, leaving a few blood stains up to the threshold of the hall door in order to throw more mystery about the whole thing. After telling me all of these things I was shown a collection of daggers each of which carried the imprint of a dagger-pierced heart on the hilt. I was told if I failed to give them the parchment one of those daggers would find its way to my heart."

"Naturally I promised to return the papyrus. "Everything went off as they had planned it except for the movement of the acting mummy's hand. That of course upset matters. One of the confederates in my house apprised my captors of this blunder at once. I was then forced to tell where the parchment was, and hurried along to a point not far from my home while one of the 'servants' went to the house and got it. Then they took me to another end of the city and allowed me to call police headquarters. My call brought Sergeant Morris and his men, and they brought me here.

"That is about all, except that I was allowed to go free on the promise that I would not prosecute my captors, and the man who acted as a mummy. If I break my word the Egyptian chief said I could expect the dagger of hearts to overtake me," shuddered the old professor.

"Now Uncle Dick you have got to promise me something before everybody here, will you?" asked Jane Olcott. *(Continued on Page 31)*

The Heart of a Tinpanner

A Serial by W. Carey Wonderly

CHAPTER XII

Footsteps on the Stairs

SHE left Thurston putting his things in order and getting ready to go out, but before she herself had reached her room, Minnie's echoing voice proclaimed to the world at large that Miss Adams was wanted at the telephone. None too pleased at the interruption, Olive turned and retraced her steps to the first floor, where the telephone, situated in a little hallway, in back of the parlor, was conveniently placed for all ears. Fortunately at this hour there wasn't anyone stirring below-stairs, but Olive detested the publicity of the thing, if only from force of habit.

"Yes, Miss Adams," she said.

It was Gina speaking: "I . . . just called you up——"

"And I'm delighted to hear your voice, but why?" demanded Olive, half humorously.

"Then you're quite all right?" One could almost see the look of relief which accompanied these words.

"As far as I know, yes." There was gentle sarcasm, not suspicion in Olive's tones. "A little excited, probably. Mr. Thurston——"

"Oh, this has nothing to do with the superior Richard! Have you—yes or no—seen the newspapers this morning?"

"The newspapers?" questioned Olive. "Now that you mention it——"

"You haven't—I 'know," Gina decided for herself. "I—— My dear, I don't know. I've been thinking about you. I'll—I'll come home, if you say——"

"But why?"

There was a little pause, almost breathless, as each waited for the other; then Miss Sevening said,

"You've got to know, I suppose, and really it isn't worth talking about—I mean, I told you how it would be, how it would end, from the start. These things are often . . . a question of money, of family, of convenience. I honestly think he is attracted to you, not in love, maybe; but—Anyway, he's going to be married—he's going to marry her."

Olive's voice was low-pitched. "You're speaking of—Kit?"

"Yes. That is why I called—it was in the paper this morning. I've been thinking about you all day, my dear——"

Olive struggled bravely, and succeeded. "Yes. That's all right, Gina. Who is she, please?"

"Grace Bellwood. She's the daughter of ——"

"Oh, no!" Olive struck in. She even laughed. "It can't be . . . Emily!"

Gina was positive. "The name is Grace Emily Bellwood. It may be only one of those marriages of convenience——" Olive shook her head, as if talking to someone in the same room.

"Why should Kit make a marriage of convenience? No—no! He loves her!" There was tragedy in her voice. "However she feels about it—and she cannot love him!—she cannot——!"

"Dear! Don't! Oh, Lord, they're not worth it. Why, I could tell you——"

OLIVE ADAMS, a young poet, meets Christopher Leinster, a good-looking young man of the upper classes, and is rapidly falling in love with him. She herself is loved by Dick Thurston, a newspaperman, who warns her against Leinster—he tells her that men of that class don't marry women of hers, but she laughs at his warnings. She goes out a great deal with Leinster, and is just beginning to discover that she is little else to him than a plaything—a companion of his idle moments. She finds her clothes are not good enough to warrant her going out so often with a man of Leinster's class, but Gina Stevening, a girl of the "tinpanner" type, promises to take her to a shop where she can buy clothes on credit. Olive gets an engagement to tour with Edwardy, a famous musician with a bad reputation as regards women. Dick proposes to her and is rejected. Olive accidentally unearths an affair between Edwardy and Miss Bellwood, whom Leinster is engaged to.

Olive shook her off. "Kit loves her!" The thought went through her like a knife. "Never mind your philosophy, Gina—he loves her; and . . . she's unworthy!"

"Oh-h, we're none of us perfect. For that matter one doesn't love for perfection's sake."

"But—this is Kit! He loves her, and she isn't worthy——!"

"Olive, you know you intrigue me!"

"Dick Thurston's got something awful on her, Gina—something disgraceful! And Kit cares. I saw the look in his eyes when they met. While she——"

"Don't get excited—steady, old girl. As for her being 'unworthy,' as you put it, well, who is? Call Friend Dicky off, if you want to do the 'third act' stuff. I'm sorry, Olive, but you—you're out of the running you know."

"I know. Yes, I know that."

"After all, it's not your funeral. I always told you Kit would marry a woman from his own world——"

"But not a woman who is unworthy!"

"If she suits him——!"

"He doesn't know."

"The bliss of ignorance. Why can't your friend Dick leave things alone? What good will it do? I don't know what the tasty dish is made of, but . . . oh-h! give 'em a chance—give everybody a chance!"

A tale of the "No-Woman's Land" that lies between Fifth Avenue and Broadway

"I'll tell him that; I'll tell him——"

"Who?"

"Dick Thurston."

"Well, suit yourself. . . . You're sure you don't want me?"

"No! I must go, now—see Dick before he gets to Edwardy's——"

"Oh! Edwardy!"

"I must go. . . . Good-by!"

"Good-by, dear."

LEAVING the telephone, Olive raced upstairs, tingling with the excitement of the situation, but Thurston's door was closed, and repeated knocking failed to bring an answer. He had gone out. But the appointment was for four o'clock. Olive's eyes sought the time and discovered it was just three. Surely Dick hadn't set out for XX9 Harlem already! He might be at the office; he was popping in and out of the Thirty-fourth Street house all day. Olive didn't know what to do. All at once she wished that Gina were at home, for Gina boasted a sort of horse sense which wasn't without results in matters such as this. Only one thing was very clear in Olive's mind, and that was that Kit Leinster must never suffer any disillusion, that she must save him unhappiness at cost to herself, if necessary. That was the measure of her love.

Standing there in the middle of her room, helpless, undecided, she felt *that* through every other emotion—she loved Kit! And Kit didn't love her—Kit had never pretended to love her. He hadn't deceived her. She just wasn't there as far as Leinster was concerned. All the time it had been . . . Grace Emily Bellwood. If she—Olive—suffered, it was through no fault of his; he had been honest. She had given her love unasked. Olive was even ready to find excuses for Miss Bellwood.

"I'm sure of nothing," she kept repeating. "It is only what others say." And then she mumbled, "'There's so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us—' Anyway, Gina's right—everybody should have a chance!"

But this wasn't helping any, or saving the situation. She might . . . telephone to Edwardy at—his office?—his hotel?—the Harlem number? Where? Time was getting short. She might miss him—at any one of the places. Probably it would be better to go——

Yes, that was it! She would go to the Harlem address. Fortunately she had learned how to change quickly, and in less than five minutes she was ready, half-running through Thirty-fourth Street to the Waldorf, at the corner. While the starter got her a cab, she went in to see the telephone chief, and in five minutes she had learned the exact location of Harlem XX9. It wasn't as far out as she had anticipated, and at her urging the chauffeur took the shortest way, through one of the avenues further east, where he could make better time. She was at the corner, within a dozen yards of the house, almost before she realized it, but even then she hadn't any time to spare.

Her idea was to see Edwardy, warn him, and let Dick Thurston find an empty nest when he arrived. This was hard on Dick—Dick who had been most generous with her; but . . .

for Kit——! She could see his eyes, with their golden iris, his smile, his faun-like movements, as she raced along. For Dick this thing meant only front-page mention, but for Kit Leinster it was a question of life-long happiness. And . . . she couldn't swear that Miss Bellwood was wicked, just—wanton!

The street number was a dingy yellow-brick flat-building, four stories and eight flats. The neighborhood was squalid. At the wide-open door Olive paused, undecided as to the next step. All at once it occurred to her that Edwardy wasn't Edwardy, here. Through a door which stood ajar, she glimpsed some children, and questioned them. They didn't know what she was talking about, and their mother summoned, only shook her head, her large bovine eyes staring. Then it flashed through Olive's brain to go to the corner store and telephone Harlem XX9.

After what seemed like hours—years!—she was rewarded by the sound of Edwardy's voice.

"Mr. Clark, please—"

"This isn't Clark," he announced briefly, and rang off.

She tried again. "I'm calling Mr. Clark——"

"This isn't Clark——"

"But the operator gave me——"

"This isn't Clark!"

"The operator——"

"Wrong number—this is Johnson."

"Oh!" cried Olive, and her face lighted up. "Excuse me, please!"

She was back at the house in a moment, and this time she went up to the fourth floor front, which was the apartment occupied by Mr. Johnson. Knuckling sharply on the door, she waited impatiently, but received no answer. She tried again, and again; silence. Then she raised her voice and spoke up.

"Mr. Edwardy, this is Olive Adams. I know you are there because I just talked to you over the phone. It is a question of life and death, perhaps." Her voice rose in a sob. "I am here in the character of friend. For heaven's sake, let me tell you——"

The door opened; she stood face to face with the great violinist.

"What is it?" he asked, without moving aside and letting her enter.

"I can't tell you here in the hall——"

"I'm expecting company." The words were out before he realized their significance.

"But that's just what you mustn't do—receive this company!" she cried. "Oh, please! Every minute is precious. I tell you, the newspaper men are on your tracks——"

He paled at the mention of newspaper notoriety. "You're sure?"

"I know! I know they mustn't find you here with—with Miss Bellwood. Head her off—stop her! It will mean—surely you know—with her engagement announced in the papers only this morning!"

He stepped aside, and when Olive sprang into the room, he followed, leaving the door wide in his sudden fear. In that moment he seemed incapable of thought and action, and stood looking at Olive, waiting for her to make the next move.

"Can you reach . . . the lady?"

He moistend his lips. "She's on the way here, now."

"Then you must run out and head her off—stop her. In a taxicab?" Edwardy nodded. "West?" Again he nodded "yes" to her question.

"Then you'd better run over a few blocks ——"

But before she could finish her speech, Edwardy raised his hand. There was the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

CHAPTER XIII

OLIVE moved first. She leaped to the door, closed and bolted it. Then they listened, breathlessly. There were only two flats on this floor, and none above. Either Johnson, at the front of the house, or Zarate, in the rear. . . . The footsteps, too light for a woman, came front.

"Too late!" muttered Edwardy, and seemed about to collapse.

Olive held up a warning hand. "Telephone ——"

"She's on her way——"

"Could you watch from the window?"

His features lightend. A gleam of cunning crept in his eyes.

"We have a signal. If everything isn't—isn't just right, why the one who is here hangs out—this." He fetched a white bed-covering and held it up for Olive's inspection. "This can be seen from the corner, and if you'd put a hot stove out your window nobody would notice it in this neighborhood.

Olive nodded, and Edwardy crept to the window and set the warning signal.

The visitor, outside in the hall, after listening a moment, took it upon himself to knock. Olive motioned to Edwardy, and the violinist retired to the inner room. Olive, hurriedly divesting herself of hat and coat, seized a magazine and threw herself down, full-length, upon a couch. She let the magazine slide to the floor beside her; she was asleep.

But the outsider didn't continue to rap her up. When the first knock wasn't answered, the person resorted to a skeleton key, and as Olive struggled upright, Dick Thurston let himself into the room. Her womanly histrionic powers stood her nobly; she rubbed her eyes with her fists, gazing at him with mouth wide open.

Really, she was waiting to give him time to speak, but apparently Dick had nothing to say. He reached out and closed the door, and then kept his ground, saying nothing, looking. At last, Olive, feeling the painfulness of the situation, rose to her feet, but when she attempted to meet Dick's glance, she found it too difficult and hurriedly she turned away.

"Olive," he said, moving towards her. "Olive! As the boys say, I don't know whether to kiss or kill you."

"Neither, please," she told him without turning.

"After all my trouble!"

"What?"

"It meant a raise, sure—more money, more—everything!"

"Not everything, Dick! Not . . . more happiness, for instance."

"Yes, more happiness," he insisted. "I had the goods on them and then you——"

"I—what?"

"You walked in and spilled the beans—yes, just that—the beans! You warned them!"

"Why, Dick Thurston!"

"Yes, you did, Olive."

"I don't know what you mean. What are you doing here, anyway? How dare you enter this apartment with a key? What right have you here? My friends—when they return, of course——"

"These Johnsons are friends of yours?" Thurston demanded.

Olive hesitated. "I know them, yes," she said at last.

"Then you know their name isn't Johnson at all! Olive, what's the use? I told you—trusted you, and you—— This is the way you repay my trust!"

He turned away, his face grown bitter. Olive, wounded to the quick, went towards him, hands outstretched, hurt because he was, sorry, since it was her hand which had inflicted the blow.

"Dick! I'm sorry. But, you remember, I told you there was nothing to your clue; you've been chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. I told you Edwardy——"

"Then you admit this flat belongs to Ivan Edwardy?" he said, swinging around and facing her.

"What? . . . I admit nothing——"

"You know it does." His voice was bitter. "You came here and warned him—the birds have flown."

"'Birds'? Oh, Dicky!" She tried to laugh away the situation.

"Well, Edwardy and Miss Bellwood, if you like." He brought one fist down in the palm of the other hand. "I tell you, Olive, I know——"

"You know? You know what? If you know, as you say, why do you mention Grace Bellwood's name in the same breath with Edwardy's? Don't be absurd."

"I'm not absurd," Thurston announced in cool, even tones. "Grace Bellwood—Grace *Emily* Bellwood—is the Emily, the 'Mrs.' Johnson of this address. There's no use in prolonging this interview," he added, and Olive thought she detected a reckless note in his speech now. "I suppose you had a very good reason for doing what you've done—in fact, I believe I know that reason, but . . . it doesn't help me. It is a disappointment not to find her here——"

"'Her'?" Olive's brows went up a trifle.

Dick just looked at her without further comment, and Olive, after a breathless moment, said quickly.

"I suppose you're still harping on Miss Bellwood. Don't Dicky; don't! Why, it was only this morning I saw a notice of her engagement to Christopher Leinster!"

"She may be going to marry your friend Leinster, but she is infatuated with this fiddler, Edwardy," Thurston said dryly.

"Nonsense!"

"Now, Olive——"

"It's not so," she insisted, breathing heavily. "I tell you, it isn't so! Grace Bellwood is nothing to Edwardy. Don't dare to suggest such a thing in your paper!"

HE took a step towards her, watching her with eyes which reflected pain rather than anger. And yet he chose to argue, trusting, dumbly, that she might be made to see the light.

"This place belongs to Ivan Edwardy?"

There was a momentary pause. "Yes, I believe it does," Olive said at last.

"And he is known here as Mr. Johnson?"

"And if he is?"

"There is no doubt about it, Olive. Nor to the use to which the place is put. Don't you see? I know all about it—more—much more—than you think—than you know, even. You have been very brave and quixotic and foolish. Now, come home. Hush! Don't—don't lie further for those who aren't worth it—please!"

But she could think only of Kit—of Kit's merry eyes, and Kit's happy laugh, and the thought that suddenly the world should go dark for him seemed more than she could bear.

"You are wrong!" she said stubbornly. "Wrong at the very end, Dick. Oh, yes, the place belongs to Edwardy, and Edwardy is Johnson, but . . . that is all—everything!"

"You mean he comes here to practice on his violin, eh?" Thurston's laugh rang out unpleasantly and made her cringe.

"No; no, not that."

"And not Miss Bellwood, either? Well, we'll see."

He turned on his heel, as if to walk out of the room, and Olive, in sudden terror, called his name, called him back.

"Dick! . . . You're not going to print that in the paper?"

"Something like it, yes."

"But, Dick——"

"I can't say that he comes here to practice. You yourself see the absurdity of that. And if not Miss Bellwood, who then?"

He was watching her closely, and saw her moisten her dry lips before the words came.

"Well, you found . . . me, didn't you?"

There was silence. She dared not look around, face him. It took all her courage, all her endurance, and then she began to tremble, tremble so violently that Thurston, mistaking the symptoms, started towards the window, which he noticed was ajar. But Olive detected the movement and was before him, protecting the white signal from his touch—she wasn't cold; the window had better stay so. She stationed herself in front of it, waiting, waiting. . . .

And then when the mist cleared from before her eyes, she saw a taxicab standing at the opposite corner, down in the mean, dingy street. Taxicabs didn't visit this neighborhood, and its position was most suspicious, so that Olive felt certain it harbored Grace Bellwood. Which meant that Miss Bellwood had seen the bedspread hanging from the window, and had refrained from entering the house. All at once Olive experienced a feeling of relief, as if the last hour, with its miserable untruths, hadn't been in vain. She had stopped Grace, and called off Dick—what mattered her conscience and Thurston's disappointment beside Kit's happiness, his faith?

All this shot through Olive's brain in that

(*Continued on page 28*)

missing page 25

missing page 26

GARD. OL., Oklahoma.—You lack stick-to-it-ive-ness; that's why you don't get more. You can do almost anything you try to do, fairly well. But, you should specialize on some one thing and cultivate a practical, orderly business sense—it can be done. You change too much. Too ambitious to do big things—without sticking.

LOTTA P., St. Louis.—No personal replies! You have the vibrations to attain a fair degree of success, unless your Path of Life is a block. You did not send it. Your name numerals are an excellent combination of aspiration, ambition and initiative.

EDITH MILLER, Chicago.—Your vibrations are very good except for two things—tact and order. Cultivate these qualities. They will help you.

JULIA; PAULINE, N. Y.—Julia is practical and hard working. Has executive and business ability. Pauline is interesting, individual—has her own ideas about everything and generally has her own way.

R. R. R., Big Rapids.—Excellent business ability, ambition, and executive power enough for a dozen persons; also agreeable, cheerful personality; would make a good politician.

ALBERT ROSS MC., Akron, Ohio.—Your natural inclinations are toward the artistic, temperamental and sentimental. But the nines in your name steer your course, so that you conscientiously do whatever comes in your way. You do well whatever you attempt.

SARA LASH, N. Y.—Versatility, and individuality, coupled with diplomacy, when you want to use it. Business ability very good.

GUS W. LINCOLN, Nebr.—You are inclined to rule. You like all the advantages of money. You will do best working for some one else.

MISS GUNDA, St. Paul.—You are headstrong and a very good worker, have a cheerful disposition, and are fond of a good time. Cultivate a little more tact. You'll get along better.

HELMAR, E. H.—No answers by private letter. You are very good at work that combines the artistic and practical—dressmaking for example. You are one of those who plan a great deal, and some other influence steps in between you and your desires. Try one thing at a time and persist in your own wishes, until it comes your way.

MARGA, Allentown, Pa.—You are original. It shows in your first name which is a ten—and is certainly an original adaptation of Margaret. Your path of life is also a ten which accentuates your C. S. You need order and diplomacy. You attempt more than you can accomplish.

JOSEPH K., No. Adams, Mass.—Very good vibrations. Intelligence and individuality; kindliness and generosity are shown. Not much personal ambition, but you like to help others.

EDWARD, AUGUST K.—Sevens predominate in your vibrations. You should cultivate a practical sense—otherwise you think out more than you put into practise. You have not much business ability, but you have vision and intelligence and might cultivate business ability.

"PETER, Ontario."—Impossible to send personal replies. Sorry. Your vibrations show a careful, methodical person; rather secretive, sensitive and exact, a little stubborn and lack imagination and joviality. Plenty of ambition but not easy to adapt yourself.

DAISY AND DAWSON R., Springfield, O.—Daisy has the most initiative and originality; Dawson has ambition and the desire to rule. Would do better to take Daisy's ideas occasionally. Otherwise Dawson is too self-willed and lacks originality. The last name is cheerful, bright, agreeable—a good combination. Path of Life agrees with cosmic state in each name.

HARRY R. M., Seattle, Wash.—Your middle name is the best. More stability and strength to your naturally easy going, pleasure-loving disposition. Path of Life also exaggerates the roving, changeable disposition. You have an agreeable personality. Cultivate application and practical sense.

MARIA ELL-B, Utica, N. Y.—You have a good combination of numerals in your name except for the "block" which seems to come between you and the things you would like to do. You have a very kind heart and a methodical, orderly mind.

VIRGINIA K., Casper, Wyo.—Your original name, if you spell it "Oda" carries a better vibration for your Path of Life and your other name, than does Virginia—although the latter is a pretty name. You are too changeable, not in your affections or friendships, but in your vocation. You don't stick to one thing long enough. If you keep Virginia, go into business—leave the temperamental and artistic alone.

EDNA V. B., Silver City, N. M.—You have a good combination of numerals, in something that will combine the practical and executive. That is, it must be regular, orderly work. You have not much originality or imagination—but can plan and execute work very well. Can "boss" others agreeably and well.

LILLY DIS.—You have for a dominant number, what is known in numerology as the "highest vibration"—which means practically that Fate guides your steps. You can not do much other than to follow out to the best of your ability, step by step, whatever comes your way. In the realm of soul and spirit you stand high. No, the "B" would not add anything numerically.

ED. R. LARNED, Kansas.—You are agreeable and capable, but lack determination and application. You do better under the direction of others, because you do well and reliably whatever you are directed to do.

"THE HOUSE OF DREADFUL NIGHT"

Edgar Allan Poe himself would not have been ashamed of having written this story

In next week's MIDNIGHT

SYLVIA C., Brookline, Mass.—Sorry, but I can't predict anything that could be construed into "fortune-telling"; you have a very good combination of numerals and if your voice is as promising as your vibrations, your ambition should be realized.

VERTICE A. A.—You have a complex, many-sided nature. That is why you find it difficult to apply or decide what you shall do. On the whole, you should take directing. Your ability is all right, but you waver, and get restless. Let some one else guide you. Decide upon some one thing. You can do many things very well—especially the practical-harmonious things.

JAMES WARNER R, Granite City, Ill.—Your dominant number is a seven. That means, you are temperamental, romantic, intuitive, inspirational and not very practical. However, you have a good practical vibration in James and so should be able to direct your sevens advantageously. You will find the "code," in MIDNIGHT of October 14.

ROSE M., N. Y.—Your vibrations are those of an agreeable person, fond of a good time, jovial and bright. You have the nine of fulfillment and will do well what you are given to do, but you do not make opportunities for yourself. You drift—Why not use the name "Rosemary?" It is strong.

ZUE E., Texas.—No personal letters. Sorry, but too many to answer. Good judgment, kindliness and a keen sense of humor are shown in your vibrations. Your chief lack is order, and method. You want things bright and cheerful and a good time. You like to read and you are very intelligent.

G. G. TAUNTON, Mass.—Very good combination—ambition, intelligence and the ability to push your plans. Cheerful disposition and people like you.

The Red Horror

(Continued from page 25)

figure seemed to breathe scorn. I winced when I saw that look. Softly I went away. She had not seen me.

Inaction held me. My suspicion rested on—what? An afternoon call—a glance—a manner that might be interpreted as utterly harmless by a disinterested onlooker. And yet this poison that I had distilled from my own consciousness was killing me slowly.

"Fool!" I said to myself. "You have not committed yourself by a word. The future is yours. Edith is yours once more, if you will but be wise and erase the past from your mind."

As this thought came to me, I was sitting in my office. A sudden peace seemed to envelop me, a heavenly healing peace. Oh, what an idiot I had been! I deserved to lose her love. Never mind—I would make it up to her. I would call her up that very minute, have her meet me in town at some cosy little place where we would dine sumptuously and then go to some play—something she should select. I looked at my watch. It was three o'clock. In a moment I was at the telephone giving her number.

A CLICK—a burr—voices. Crossed wires of course! A man and woman were talking. I frowned with irritation, and was about to signal the operator again when a familiar quality in those tones arrested me.

"The trunk has just gone, dear." It was the woman who spoke. "I'm taking a small grip with me."

"Then get a taxi," came the man's voice, "and meet me in half an hour just outside the gate marked 'Twentieth Century.' Be sure and——" There was a click—then silence and the operator's voice saying, "Did you get your party?"

The receiver fell from my hand as I swayed against the wall. And through the chaos that seethed in my brain, one idea persisted, madly, blindly. I must get to the station at once. I clutched at the table, the chairs, to steady myself. I was like a drunken man. Not a second of time to lose. I gathered my strength together and reached for my hat. As I was about to pass into the outer office, my legs seemed to turn about of themselves. Over there—in the farthest desk—in the lower left-hand drawer—my keys jangled with my trembling as I opened that drawer. I took the object that I sought and placed it in my coat pocket. Presently I was down on the ground floor of the building and out on the street.

A signal to a passing taxi after what seemed hours of agonized waiting, then a blur of people and streets and I was at the great station. I had alighted at a side entrance. I ran for the ticket office, noting the clock as I passed. There was still time. I purchased my ticket, then made for the lovers' rendezvous, carefully keeping behind a pile of newspapers and magazines as I watched.

There they were! Edith, my wife! And Radisson! They had doubtless met on the stairway. He held her arm tightly, masterfully, while she swayed adoringly toward him as they went through the gate and on to the waiting train. In another moment I followed. I noted the car they entered and going inside, I watched them. Their section was at the far end of the car. I stood in the doorway, while they settled themselves and their luggage. As in a dream I heard the cries of the guard, the noise of last minute passengers shouting farewells, the long drawn "All aboard!"

I was conscious of people passing as I stood there, and of their curious glances at me. But I had eyes only for that guilty pair. He had arranged her coat and hat upon the seat opposite them and was now beside her, looking into her eyes and smiling that slow smile of his, while she, lost to all sense of her surroundings leaned her head upon his outstretched arm. There was nothing of the traditional furtive manner about them. They did not stop to peer fearfully about for a sight of possible friends or acquaintances. They might have been on a desert isle for all the effect their surroundings had on them.

I do not know how long I stood there. There was but one thought beating in my brain—beating like a trip-hammer. "*It must be done—now—now—now!*" Life was ruined for me, utterly. It could never again be aught but a maimed crippled thing so far as I was concerned. I saw the conductor enter the car at their end. Soon he would reach me. I had to get the thing over. With one hand in my coat pocket, tightly grasping the revolver, I started toward Edith and Radisson. His hand—

the left one—rested upon the plush arm of his seat I saw again, with unutterable loathing, the tip of that scar. I made ready to pull back the trigger.

A crash—a cry of agony from me—the sound of ripping, tearing wood and steel—the shrieks of women—a moment of vivid red, and then darkness.

I KNEW no more until I awoke in the clean white bed of a hospital. A nurse sat beside me. As the light of consciousness dawned in my eyes she nodded encouragingly at me and smiled.

I groaned with pain as I attempted to move. I feared to talk, to ask questions, but by degrees I learned that the train had been wrecked near the town in which I now was, that I had been there two weeks, that I had suffered serious internal injuries and a badly cut hand—the left one. It was tightly encased in bandages now, and lay on the coverlid as inert as a piece of wood. I burned to ask of Edith and Radisson, but of course the nurse knew nothing of them.

I wanted to see the newspaper accounts of the wreck but this the doctor had forbidden until I was stronger. One thing only was a source of comfort to me. Fate had saved me from being a murderer. True, I was one by intent, yet in my heart there was ineffable thankfulness that after all I had been prevented from really carrying out my revenge.

I lay in a doze most of the time, a sort of reaction from the weeks of sleepless nights I had had before all this came about. It was on the fourth day after my regaining consciousness, that I awoke from a heavy slumber, to hear the doctor and nurse talking in half-whispers.

I made no move to indicate that I had awakened.

"He has no idea that the hand was torn off?" It was the doctor who asked this.

"Not the slightest," whispered the nurse. "And I'll keep the new hand bandaged in such a way that he won't suspect. Then after it's all healed we can tell him."

"It was a great experiment." This from the doctor. "It's been tried with success abroad."

He passed out into the hall with the nurse.

As the import of their words crept into my understanding, my body seemed to turn to ice. "Hand torn off—the new hand—he won't suspect—a great experiment——"

I tried to piece this together. From ice I turned to fire. I burned with fever. The nurse touched me. As I opened wild eyes at her she said, "You were moaning in your sleep. I thought best to waken you."

"The hand—the hand——" I could scarcely articulate.

She patted it soothingly. "Now, now," she spoke as one might to a child, "I'll give it a fresh dressing." She went out and returned with bandages and lotions. As she slowly unrolled the wrappings my heart beat so that I feared it would smother me. The nurse glanced quickly at me once or twice, half-shielding the hand as she did so.

It was now free of bandages. In the dim light of the darkened room, I looked at it, my eyes seeming to strain from their sockets. It was not—it was not my hand! It was—it was—a terrible scream burst from me! There where the wrist and forearm met I saw the edge of a triangular mark—his mark!

They had given me the hand of Radisson!

* * * * * *

They call me insane. They have brought me to this place because, I am, as they say, a maniac. That is why I have written this. They cannot understand why I am always gazing at my hand. That is why I want you, the public, to know.

Heart of a Tinpanner

(*Continued from page 24*)

brief moment of silence. And then Dick came towards her. She wasn't sure; if he had struck her down for that last obvious lie she wouldn't have been surprised. But that wasn't Thurston, of course. Coming over to her, he led her gently to a chair, made her sit down, and stood over, waiting, a certain wistful expression in his honest, dog-like eyes.

"You don't believe me," Olive said, with a little sigh. "In spite of—of everything you don't believe it was really I."

"No," he assured her, with gentle firmness: "I don't believe you are 'Mrs. Johnson'—in spite of everything, as you say. But——"

"But what?" she ventured, as he stopped.

"You have taught me that one can care so very much that nothing else but caring counts or matters, Olive," Thurston said. "I am a fearfully greedy, hopelessly ambitious fellow, but I guess I can be as generous as you. So . . . we'll forget today—forget Emily, and Mrs. Johnson, and everything, eh? There's no story—a false clue and a blind alley."

"Dicky!" Tears were perilously near the surface.

Their glances met, and Thurston nodded reassuringly, even smiling a little. Then he set quietly to work, gathering together her hat, her coat and her gloves which he handed Olive mutely, waiting while she put them on. It seemed understood between them that she was going home, and he was going to take her.

Outside the room, in the dark, evil-smelling hallway, she paused and asked a question, a question which she had to put in spite of herself.

"What are you thinking?"

There wasn't light enough now to see the expression on his face, which was just as well.

"I was thinking," said Dick, "that I'd give the best ten year's of my life to know you'd done this thing for me."

(*Continued next week*)

Dead Men's Diamonds

(*Continued from page 20*)

"Yes," said Craig. "The door has been locked—from the inside."

"Suppose you tell me about it," prompted Wolcott. "I can work from there, then."

Craig complied briefly. He outlined the case in a few words.

"And when the lights went up," he concluded, "there was—" he motioned to the figure of Sanderson, not trusting himself to speak.

There was a complete silence as Wolcott looked from one to the other. Finally it was the detective himself who broke the awkward silence.

"And where is the diamond?" he asked.

THEY regarded each other blankly. In the tremendous excitement of finding their president dead, they had entirely lost sight of the hugely valuable gem.

"Why, I think I passed it to Peters last," said Milgrim, "and——

"I passed it to Waterman—"

"And I to Craig—"

And so it went. Nobody could remember who had actually had it last. A search was instituted, but it was nowhere to be found.

It was Craig, the senior, now that Sanderson was gone, who suggested that those present be searched. "I'm sure that we'll all feel better about it if we're searched," he said to the detective. "I know that, as for myself, I could never feel easy about it otherwise. The whole affair is too dreadful——"

The others agreed with him, and Wolcott took up the search. Every man present was searched, including the dead man. To no result.

"And yet you say the door was locked from the inside," said Wolcott. "And the window—"

He strode to the window that was behind where the living Sanderson had sat. He threw back the heavy velvet draperies and disclosed an iron grillwork that absolutely precluded entry from without. "Yet, it must have been an outside job," he muttered to himself.

He made a hasty examination of the body, pausing long over the burned mark at the temple.

"You say there were blue flashes—" he asked, and he was assured that it had been so. "M-m-m," he pursed his lips.

"Call in the proprietor," he directed, and Milgrim called from the door. By now the proprietor, Colazzi, knew that something extraordinary was afoot, and he was hovering rather close to the door.

His face was a study as he stood in the doorway and contemplated the figure that had been Sanderson. The matter was explained to him swiftly. Pale with fright, he sank down in a chair, as far from the dead body as possible.

"Mr. Colazzi," said Wolcott softly, "why did the lights go out at midnight—for about ten seconds?"

Colazzi looked at him, pathetic in his fright, pasty-faced, in sharp contradistinction to the deep black of his curling mustachios. "I—I put them out," he faltered.

The detective pursed his lips. "Indeed," he said. "Why?"

"Why, Mr. Sanderson asked me to," said Colazzi. "I was to put them out for a few seconds after the clock began to strike twelve." In response to Wolcott's inquiring gaze, he continued hastily. "I don't know why—some trick he was going to play on them, I think."

There was the sound of hurrying at the door, and a slight, girlish figure burst through. She stood there, tense as a bow string, her hand on the lintel and her hypnotized eyes burning their way through to the figure that had been her father.

"Father!" came from her lips in agonized, soft accents, and again, "Father!"

The men assembled turned away for a brief moment and left her with her dead.

* * * * *

IT was a touching, affecting scene, and the most callous of those who were there felt shaken before it was concluded. Craig, who had known Yvonne since her birth, finally managed to calm her down, in some small measure, and with the permission of Wolcott, the body was removed to a far corner of the room and covered with a cloth, making a sombre mound with its shapelessness that is found only in the dead.

They tried to prevail upon Yvonne to go home, but it was of no use. Shaken and unnerved as she was, she stayed with them. Something had impelled her here, something had called, she knew not what. It had been a haunting fear, a dread imagining, not for herself, but for her father. She had known he was in danger, some monotonous, insistent voice within had told her. She could no more have stayed away from him than she could have voluntarily stopped breathing. She had answered the call. It had been too late.

A smothered, muffled sob, shaking her frame, broke the heavy quiet.

In the meantime Wolcott, with the aid of an electric torch, was examining the window sill in great detail. Evidently satisfied at last, he snapped off his light and turned to the assembled party. It was his matter-of-fact voice that cut the tension at last and made them feel as much at ease as was possible under the circumstances.

"Gentlemen, you say the door was locked. And the window, as you all can see, is grated. Nobody could have entered—and left in the short space of time during which the room was dark. And yet—a man is killed, somehow—and an immensely valuable jewel is stolen—also, somehow—during the space of perhaps ten seconds or less. Have you any suggestions?" He regarded the faces before him courteously.

"Of course," put in Milgrim, "if you suspect anybody here——"

"I suspect nobody yet," replied Wolcott politely. "And everybody. You are all respectable men; all men of standing. Yet a murder is a very human thing. There are moments when anybody will commit a murder. Give the proper moment, the proper state of mind and the proper tools, nobody can say which one of us will commit the next murder. This was a premeditated murder, carefully planned and carefully executed. It has all the earmarks of an outside job."

They were silent again. Colazzi, the proprietor, stirred. Probably the sight of the untidy table, the spilled glass, reacted on him subconsciously. He rose.

"Shall I call in the waiter to have him clear away this mess?" he asked Wolcott. Wolcott nodded. Colazzi went to the door and issued a rapid-fire, foreign order.

Instantly a waiter came to the door, tray in hand, ready to clear the table. Colazzi looked at him inquiringly.

"Where's Giuseppi?" he asked.

"He's out," replied the waiter. "He asked me to finish up for him."

He advanced to the table with a sidewise glance at the white-robed mound in the corner. Wolcott glanced at him with seeming carelessness, and as he passed Wolcott bent and picked some little thing off the floor.

This waiter was not Italian. His high cheekbones gave the lie to that, and his good color.

"How long have you been working here?" asked Wolcott, and the waiter stopped dead in his tracks.

A gasp, a quick, frightened intake of breath from where Yvonne sat diverted the answer. She was on her feet now, shrinking away from the man, from the waiter with the tray in his hand. He regarded her steadily, looking her straight in the eyes, an amused smile flickering around the corner of his lips.

"It's he! That's the man!" she was exclaiming, her eyes wide in terror, her face dead white. "He's the one—the one who called yesterday afternoon to steal the diamond! He's the one!"

"There, there," came in the steady voice of Craig. "It's all right. We'll take care of him."

"He was at our house yesterday afternoon——" she was insisting.

Wolcott stepped to the front. "Do you hear what this lady says?" he addressed the waiter.

The waiter shrugged his shoulders, to indicate that he could not be responsible for the ravings of a woman. "I never saw her before," he said in perfect English, clear cut, with the faintest trace of a foreign accent.

"He lies!" she shouted shrilly, hysterically, her nerves giving way. "I know that face—those eyes! those eyes!" Her breath sobbed through her parted lips. "I'll never forget them——"

Craig put his arm around her shoulders and quieted her. She lay on his breast for a moment, shuddering and sobbing. Wolcott took charge of the situation in his quiet, decisive way.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"John Smith," answered the waiter steadily.

"Very good," commented Wolcott. "You're original, anyway. When did you come here to work, John Smith—for the first time?"

"This morning."

There was a brief silence. Then:

"John Smith—or whatever your name is—I arrest you for the murder of Creighton Sanderson."

A gasp of surprise came from those present. As for the waiter, he did not move an eyelash. "If this is a joke——" he began.

"It isn't a joke," remarked Wolcott quietly. "Many a man has been hanged—or electrocuted —" he regarded his man steadily—"on less evidence than that."

He deftly patted the man's pockets for weapons and found none. "Ah, what's this?" he asked, drawing a pair of electrician's rubber gloves from the man's pockets. A flicker of alarm came into the eyes of "John Smith"—his first sign of emotion.

"Sit down, John Smith," directed Wolcott, and his quarry quietly seated himself at the table, next to what had been the seat of poor, doomed Sanderson.

"Do you deny that you killed Mr. Sanderson?" he asked him directly, bluntly.

"I never saw the man before in my life," said the waiter, an amused sneer shading his face. "Certainly I deny it. There is nothing upon which you can base such an absurd charge——"

"Perhaps not—we'll let you be the judge of that. In the first place, John Smith, I noticed that—when you came into the room—your shoes had a wet, thick mud upon them. Now, it appears to be a dry night. Can you account to me in any way for that?"

The other was silent, but those in the room leaned forward tensely. Yes, there was mud on the man's shoes.

"Another thing I noticed—when you entered the room a little red berry dropped from the cuff of your trousers—here it is. Do you know the name of it?" He leaned forward. The other shook his head.

"I'll tell you," said Wolcott. "It's a barberry. Can you tell me how that got there? It happens," he went forward before the other could reply, "that I am familiar with the outside of this building. Only two of the windows have window boxes—and only one window has a barberry bush in the box. That window, John Smith, is the window to this room."

A WHISTLE of amazement went up from Milgrim, but nobody noticed him. Wolcott continued. "In an examination of the outside of this window, John Smith, I found heavy footmarks in the window box, which had recently been watered and was full of soft mud. The same kind of mud as there is on your boots. I also found something else." He stepped quickly to the window, opened it and drew inward through the grating a long, stiff wire.

"Did you ever see this before?" he asked. The prisoner was silent. It was as if he had not heard.

"No. Well, perhaps I can refresh your memory. I first got the idea when I looked at poor Creighton Sanderson—the little burned spot on his temple. I have seen electrocutions before—and perhaps—" he looked fixedly at the waiter—"I'll see them again. If you took this long piece of wire and held it in your hands on the window sill, with your hands encased in these electrician's rubber gloves—these gloves *were* a find for me, weren't they?—and touched one end of the wire to the third rail on the elevated track and the other end to a spot on a human being—Mr. Sanderson, say—the result would be instant death to the man who was touched, wouldn't it?"

The waiter was silent. "You can confess or not, just as you like," remarked Wolcott. "I have the goods on you. What did you do with the diamond —and how did you get it?"

The waiter regarded him coolly. "I haven't got the diamond." He licked his dry lips, and stretched out his hand to take a glass of water from the table —the glass that stood before the place where the ill-fated millionaire had met his end.

There was a cry from Yvonne. Remembrance of something was in her wide-open eyes. Jumping to her feet she exclaimed, "Don't let him! Not the glass!" They stared at her, astounded into inaction.

THE waiter calmly raised the glass to his lips. There was a galvanized leap from Yvonne, and she struck the glass from his lips, to send it crashing to the floor.

The waiter made a dive after it, but was jerked back sharply by the strong hand of Wolcott. Yvonne was bending forward, staring intently. They all bent forward.

"*Look!*" she pointed.

There, shimmering in its beauty before them on the floor, lay the diamond, a ball of flashing light.

A baffled, defeated look came into the black eyes of the waiter.

"I just remembered," said Yvonne. "Daddy told me all about it yesterday. He wanted to shock you—" she turned to his associates gathered around, "so he arranged to have the lights go out at twelve o'clock, and when they went up again the diamond was to be missing. You see, he knew something that most people don't know—and that even I forgot about it until this minute, though he told me about it yesterday.

"It's this: If you drop a perfect diamond into a tumbler of water, the diamond will become invisible. That's what he told me he would do." She turned to the waiter. "I don't know how you found out about it——"

"I was in your areaway yesterday when you were standing on the steps with him and he was telling you about it. I heard." He turned to the detective. "I guess I may as well make a clean breast of it. I determined to possess this stone—I had followed it from Russia—and we don't mind an occasional killing there—if it is necessary. When I heard Sanderson tell about hiding the diamond in a glass of water, I decided that if I could kill him before the lights went up, the shock and surprise would be so great that I would be able to get away with the stone before I could be stopped. It was simple to get a position here this morning—good waiters are scarce—" Colazzi nodded gloomily. "I informed myself as to where the party was to be, and where Mr. Sanderson would probably sit—and the rest was simple, as you know," he bowed to Wolcott. "As it was, I was nearly caught with my head outside the curtain when the light flashed on suddenly."

"If it hadn't been for this lady—" he bowed ironically to her.

She shrank away from him, the reaction setting in. There was a muffled sob from her, and silence, as she pressed close to the fatherly bosom of old Mr. Craig. The Russian turned to the detective and held out his hands for the bracelets.

"I am ready to go with you," he said.

The Dragon's Eye

(*Continued from page 14*)

blocks, turned down a side street and went on until they came to a modest house on the side of whose door was the brass plate of a modiste, "Madame Hortense."

They went up the stoop and entered a showroom on the first floor. They nodded familiarly to the matron who was arranging some frocks in a wardrobe, and passed on into the back room, where a young woman was in attendance, and who after a glance at them pressed the wall at her side. A panel slid silently aside and disclosed an opening through which they passed. The panel closed behind them as silently as it had opened.

They went down a long flight of carpeted stairs and gave a peculiar knock on the door at the bottom. The door opened and they passed through that into a softly lighted corridor carpeted with thick rugs. This they traversed until they came to another door, at which they tapped, in response to which a slide opened to permit the guardian on the other side to inspect them. After that they were admitted, and made their way up another flight of stairs into a luxurious reception room.

They were met by a Chinaman wearing his native costume. He bowed low and relieved them of their outer garments, his face as impassive as that of a wooden doll.

"Refreshments?" he asked in very good English.

"No," Gertie responded promptly; "I'll go right up."

"I'll have a drop of champagne first," her companion said.

"Go to it!" ejaculated Gertie, and without further concern for her companion left the room with an alacrity that showed her eagerness to begin her attack on the goddess of chance.

She passed on into what had once been a dining-room, and was now, indeed a room of varied refreshment. There was a long table set with the whitest and most costly of linen, china and glassware of the choicest, and solid silver. Flowers decorated the table, and on the long sideboard was an array of hot and cole foods and liquors of all sorts.

Another Chinaman presided here. He came forward in silence, bowing respectfully and then pulling out a chair from the table for her to sit on, waiting behind it.

"No," she said in an ordinary tone of voice, "only a glass of champagne and a cigarette." But when the silent attendant had served her, she whispered softly, "You've had the word? She's to win today."

"Yes," was his only response, as he resumed his stand by the sideboard as if he had no interest in her.

GERTIE, meanwhile, had mounted the stairs and gone to the upper floor, where she found card games going on in the back room, and roulette in the larger front room. There were as many as fifty richly-dressed women in the rooms.

She glanced about and then went to one of the tables, after investing her nine hundred dollars in chips. She watched the progress of the game for a while, and presently after the fateful little ball had been started on its whirling round, placed a pile of chips on the number 7, contenting herself with the one venture.

She played with the absorbed, set face of the passionate gambler. Sometimes she won and again she lost; but on the whole she gained. At dinner time she had barely the patience to leave the game, but did tear herself away long enough to go downstairs and telephone home that she was dining out.
played until midnight and then reluctantly cashed in for something over fifteen thousand dollars.

She triumphantly stuffed her money into her bag, and was shown out by a different door from that she had entered at. A taxi came up the instant she appeared.

At home, it was some time before she could compose herself to sleep, her brain was so full of her great win, but finally youth and good health triumphed.

She wasn't sure how long she slept, but she suddenly waked with the consciousness that someone was in the room. She opened her eyes and looked about, and in a moment was startled by the figure of a man bending over her dressing table.

Her heart began to beat violently, but she thought of all the money she had won, and of the jewels she had stripped from her fingers and her neck, and she regained her courage. She slipped her hand under her pillow and drew out a small automatic. She sat up quietly, pointed the weapon at the intruder, and with her free hand pressed the electric button by the side of her bed.

The man merely raised his head and looked into the mirror before him. "Don't shoot lady," he said coolly. "You'd never hit me with your hand trembling like that, but somebody might hear the noise and come."

"What do you want?" she found voice to demand.

"I was after your jewels, lady, and that nice little wad of money you won today."

"Put up your hands!" she cried.

"I'd spill some of these sparklers on the floor if I did that, lady, and I might lose some of them."

"I'm a good shot," she said. "I could hit you."

"Yes," he admitted, "I know you're a good shot." He turned as he spoke and she could see that he was masked. "But you won't shoot. If you were to make as much noise as that someone would be sure to come, and I might be caught. You wouldn't like that, lady."

She wondered why she didn't shoot, why she wasted time on the impudent thief. "Why wouldn't I like it?" she demanded. "It's what I want. Put up your hands!"

"Oh, well," he drawled, "I'll tell you if you want to know. If I was caught, lady, I'd be compelled to tell about that check for twenty thousand you forged. You wouldn't want me to do that."

(*To be continued*)

Without a Soul

(*Continued from Page 16-17*)

observed, come the letters "R. U. R." The factory is located on a mysterious island, and the story of it is that anciently an old inventor came to it, and in its hermit seclusion, devoted himself to studying the inner arcanum of life's problems. He was seeking for the source of life itself.

There came a day when he found in his testtube a substance, utterly unlike protoplasm, yet a living substance, capable of growth. Stirred with a restless energy, he hurried on through years of research, until finally he attempted the experiment of manufacturing a dog. It was not a very good dog. It looked more like a calf. But it lived; more, it barked!

From this point on, aided by his son, he made astounding progress, until the day came when he turned out a human being—a creature that breathed, moved, talked, *thought!*

The various inventors who finally aided him in the perfection of his astonishing undertaking were engineers of far greater competence than Nature. They did away with many unnecessary traditions in human architecture. The Robots which they produced were greatly simplified in their digestive apparatus. They had no procreative mechanisms. They never fell ill. They did not know pain. Most important of all, they were deprived of all forms of desire.

The Robots, to all outward appearances, were human beings like their masters. But, having no desires, they were docile slaves, the most admirable servants in all the history of the world. Such a product had unlimited commercial possibilities. Great factories sprang quickly into existence on the island. The distribution of production was arranged with modern engineering genius. There was a weaving plant for spinning nervous systems. There was a bone plant. There was a blood laboratory. There was a brain plant. And finally there was a huge assembling plant, where the Robots were assembled, an incredibly large number every minute. Then they were kept in giant storehouses, to be shipped to every corner of the globe. All the places in the world where labor was needed were buying Robots by the hundreds, thousands, millions.

At the outset of the play, we find Harry Domin, general manager of Rossum's Universal Robots, dictating mail to his stenographer. She is a Robot. She sits uprightly, like an inanimate figure, at her typewriter. As he dictates, she remains immobile, making no notations. Her brain is so constructed that her memory is free from distractions. When the letter is finished, her fingers tap out briskly on the keys, and her arm shoots out with the finished letter ready for his signature.

The doorman is a Robot. Neither he, nor the stenographer—no Robot, indeed—ever laughs, or smiles. But they can carry on a conversation. Some of them have better brains than their makers. All that they lack is a soul.

THIS doorman Robot introduces a beautiful girl visitor to the plant—Helena Glory, daughter of one of the officials, who has just arrived from Europe on the weekly boat, and is very curious to see and know all about the manufacture of Robots. She is also frankly shocked at the whole business. In truth, she is a young woman with a message. Back home she is a leading spirit in the women's club movements. Her errand to the island is to plant radicalism in the hearts of the Robots.

Harry Domin laughs—but not too heartily. For one thing, Helena *is* the daughter of his boss. For another, she is so charming that Harry already is in love with her. But he does laugh. You can't make Robots radical, you know. Robots don't want anything. They have no desires. They have no soul. And Harry, for one, doesn't intend to let them get souls.

It is amusing, a moment later, when Helena meets Harry's associates. The typical continental physician, Doctor Gall, who is head of the physiological and experimental department; the handsome young Mr. Fabry, the engineer general and technical controller; Dr. Hallemeier, the head of the institute for the psychological training of the Robots; Mr. Alquist, a dear kindly old gentleman, who is the architect and builder, and Consul Busman, the business manager. They are delighted with Helena, and amazed when she begins to preach to them. She thinks they are Robots!

Every one of them falls head over heels in love with her, but Harry is the lucky man. Their married life is happy except for the shadow of the Robots, for whom Helena entertains a profound and tender pity. It is she who secretly burns up the mystic formula by which they are made. With that fire perishes the great secret. And it is she who constantly urges her most disappointed lover, Doctor Gall, to make them like people—with the possibility of reproduction!

But tender Helena had chosen an evil hour to burn her manuscript. Doctor Gall had done what she asked him to do. He had given the Robots pain and with pain came soul! The seeds of revolution grew in their hearts. They hated their masters. There were a thousand Robots for every human being on earth—and when the revolution came, humanity was destroyed. At last it came to the island itself; a horde of invading Robots set fire to the buildings and slew Helena and Harry and Doctor Gall and Dr. Hellemeier and Fabry and Busman—sparing only the gentle Mr. Alquist, because he was a builder and labored with his hands.

Next Week
The winners in the MIDNIGHT THRILL CONTEST

IN the epilogue which closes the play an appalling situation has come to pass. Every human being is dead, except old man Alquist. The great secret of Robot manufacture is burned. The Robots cannot make themselves. They are wearing out by the millions. Life is dying on the earth. Feverishly, prayerfully, yet despairingly, Alquist is trying to recapture the secret—but without success.

And then the miracle comes to pass.

Doctor Gall had made a girl, fashioned as nearly like the Helena who was denied to his love, as he could make her. She was a woman like all other women. And he had made a boy like all other boys. And as these two meet, the touch of their flesh kindles within them strange fires which thrill them and daze them and which they do not understand. An open book is on the table; a book on physiology. The boy reads it and learns the riddle of life. He turns, as old Alquist comes upon them.

In a flash, the old man sees the implication of their meeting. Yet it seems too good to be true. He threatens the girl with the dissecting room, but the boy defends her. He threatens the boy and the girl defends him. They belong to each other.

The old man clasps his hands and cries: "Go, Adam! Go, Eve! In you, humanity shall be reborn!"

Leaving for other times and places, a discussion of he po litical and social meanings of this play, let us remember its inner meaning—that however mechanical a civilization the mind of man may impose upon the world, spirituality will emerge from it before the soul is utterly crushed.

And let me add that Karl Capek has made a miracle when he can take such an idea, as grotesque as a Moorish arabesque, and cause it to appear as natural as ham and eggs!

He Fell in Love with a Ghost

(*Continued from Page 19*)

Of all men alive, I was then the most miserable. More than ever, I found it impossible to compose. The only satisfaction I found was in quarreling with Etta. Something cringing in me had been killed; I no longer submitted to her domineering love; I defied her and acquainted her with my aversion to her.

Months passed. They were months of increasing rancor in my household, unrelieved by a single visit from my dream girl. At last I began to fear that it was only a disordered fancy, after all. This but added to my bitterness. The inevitable clash came at last; Etta let forth a final boiling spurt of fury, and left me. A week later I was served with a notice that she was suing me for divorce, and to my ears came the scandal that she was flirting with a naval officer.

I was glad she was gone. For the first time peace came to my mind, as I trod the solitary rooms of my house. In just a few days I was measurably tranquil again. My spirit felt convalescent; I unlocked my piano and let my fingers roam idly up and down the keyboard.

She had been gone a week, when the fever of composition came back to me with redoubled emphasis, after two years of lying dormant. I got out paper and pencil, and with the sheets propped above the fallboard of the instrument, I returned again to the Burroughs verses, sure now that the elusive melody would come.

Perhaps I was a bit too eager; too impulsive; too sure. At any rate, I labored over the task, tearing up paper until it lay littered in disordered piles around the pedals, and I no nearer the music than before.

I felt defeated. All unnoticed, the hours had sped by me, and it was past midnight when I rose from the piano and staggered over to my desk. There, with the white light of a green-shaded lamp bathing my head, I bowed my face in my arms and gave up.

And then the miracle of all my days occurred.

To my wearied ears came the strains of far-off music—a familiar music that set my heart quaking in a very agony of mingled apprehension and hope. I sat bolt upright, and a sob of joy broke from me.

My own, my beloved, was there before me!

She smiled at me—the old, sweet, loving smile! This night she was unclad, save for a golden girdle about her rosy loins, and she glided before me, as if eager for some beautiful thing to happen.

Raising a finger to her lips, she looked away, as if bidding me hearken.

I listened.

The sweet strains of the orchestra had died away and now I heard the solemn music of a mighty organ, its perfectly voiced reeds and pipes singing a grand hymn of exultation. It was simple and yet sublime.

And then, as she smiled at me so wisely, I received her unspoken thought. The lovely apparition fascinated me; held me so chained with adoration that at first I could barely grasp her meaning.

"Write!"

Write! That was it! Write down the swelling harmonies and exultant melody that pealed from the unseen organ.

This was the music I could not reach; she had brought it to me as a gift of her love—the music of the poem that promised so much to tired hearts:

"The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea;
Nor time nor space, nor deep nor high
Can keep my own away from me!"

As the last note was recorded on the paper before me, I looked up.

My darling raised her hand and touched her lips—then blew me a phantom kiss and was gone!

The next morning when I payed over my notes I was absolutely certain that I was the composer, or really the transcriber, of a masterpiece of music. But I wanted another's opinion—the unprejudiced opinion of some one who knew.

WITH the precious manuscript tucked under my arm, I walked over to Fifth Avenue from Grand Central Station. I remember that when I reached the corner the traffic lights were changing. It stirred old memories of a purple twilight, when I had first met Etta. Nos, as I looked at them, they changed again—from green to scarlet, and then to kindly gold.

On a Fifth Avenue bus I rode down to Greenwich Village and walked hurriedly over to Sheridan Square where dwelt my friend, the mystic. Again I was lucky to find him home.

He sat down before his grand piano with my manuscript, and easily played over the melody which had been dictated to me out of the air. At its conclusion he turned toward me, his eyes shining with fervor.

"It is beautiful! It is magnificent! It is sublime!" he cried, allowing all his emotions full play. "Wait until you hear it sung. My daughter shall sing it for you."

He got up and went to the door.

"Madeline!" he called softly.

Before I could breathe twice, he had stepped back, his face transfigured with an unearthly smile, and his daughter came into the room.

The girl of my dreams—the red-haired angel of my vision—was there, in the flesh, before me!

As I told you, I believe I could be a great composer, if I had the proper kind of wife! And, as I also told you, there remains with me now one strangely dazzling hope.

There seems to be no doubt that Etta will get her divorce. And there seems to be little doubt in my mind that I shall have a red-haired wife!

Perhaps Rachmaninoff will yet play my sonatas, and the great orchestras of the world my symphonies!

Who knows?

MIDNIGHT'S ALL-STAR CAST

The illustrations in this issue were posed by the following cast:

Miss Josephine MacNicoll of Greenwich Village Follies

Miss Joanna La Bolero

Miss Zosha La Bolera

Miss Eileen Christie

Miss Shirley Poynter

Mr. Allan Simpson

Mr. Reginald Simpson

Mr. Louis De Klade

Mr. Arthur Kaye

Mr. Milton Silver

Mr. Charles A. Hancock

to whom the editors of MIDNIGHT make grateful acknowledgement.

The Dagger of Hearts

(*Continued from Page 22*)

"Yes, my dear, I will," replied the old man, his fingers closing over those of his neice.

"You will never buy, or procure, any more things that have death attached to their possession as this parchment has? You promise to keep out of such trouble, and away from Egypt and all other countries where you have been rambling through for years? Promise?"

"Yes, Jane, I give you my word before all of these good gentlemen that I am done with such escapades I will stop collecting and stay home and study," answered Professor Olcott slowly and sincerely, as he got up from his chair in the midst of applause that followed his declaration.

A few minutes later the Egyptian who acted as a mummy was set at liberty, and Professor Olcott, Jane, and Hanford left the police station in a car for home.

Her Father's Blood

(*Continued from Page 9*)

smoke filled the room, and a grotesque look of surprise seeped into the eyes of the burglar as his legs buckled under him slowly. He half spun around and slumped down in a shapeless, misformed heap.

Eyes wide and staring, heart beating far from normal, face pale as putty, Dorothea gazed down at him as he lay on the rug, palm of his right hand uppermost. On the palm of his hand was burned a circle enclosed in a five-pointed star. She knew that mark.

"Father!" she breathed.

Dazed and silent, they found her sitting on the edge of the large library chair, with the body at her feet, when they burst into the room a moment later. She glared straight at them, but did not know them. She was, for the time, a woman without a mind.

* * * * *

II

IT was three days before her reason and her memory returned to her. Three days that had been filled with her hysterical outbursts—three red nights and days of fever and terror.

And on the third day she opened her eyes and looked quietly into the eyes of her nurse.

"Well, you're back again," smiled the nurse.

"Is—is he dead?" she asked, holding her breath for the answer.

"Who—the burglar?" asked the nurse. "You bet he is—dead as a doornail."

Dorothea turned away and buried her face in her pillow. Her shoulders heaved, and her brain reeled under her emotion. She had shot—or as good as shot—her father. Her father!

That burned mark on his palm had identified him to her, though she did not know him by sight. Many a time her uncle had told her about that mark of identification, and once he had gone so far as to draw it for her. This had in response to repeated questions about her father. There could be no mistake—she had killed her father. Her father's blood was upon her head, and her hands were stained with it. The world went black around her.

There was a light touch upon her shoulder. She looked up into the face of her uncle.

"What's the matter, honey?" he asked, patting her feverish face.

"Oh, uncle dear—my father—father! I—I——"

"What about him?" he asked soothingly.

"Why, didn't you see him?" she asked. "I killed him!"

He stared at her for an instant, and then turned to the nurse.

"Nurse, please bring the revolver that was found in the library."

The nurse went out and returned in a moment with the gun. "Show it to Miss Solinger," directed the old man. The nurse did as she was told, but the girl refused to touch the thing.

"Take it away—I don't want to see it," she murmured, shrinking back against her uncle. He took the gun himself.

"What I wanted you to see was this," he pointed to the revolver. "This is the gun the—ah—burglar had. The one you think killed him. It couldn't have killed him because it couldn't have been fired. It has no trigger, as you can see. He simply used it for the purpose of frightening——"

"Then who——" burst in Dorothea, a sudden hope springing in her heart.

"That we don't know," smiled her uncle. "The police say that the shot came from the French windows on the east side of the library—whoever did it had only to put his hand through the window and shoot. They think it might have been some confederate who—ah—disapproved of what he was doing."

"So I wan't the cause of my father's death——"

"Your father's!" ejaculated her uncle. "Why should you think it was your father?"

"That burned circle and star on the palm of his hand—you often told me about it——"

"I know," he interrupted. "But that was the insignia of a disreputable secret society—there were a score of others who had the same mark on the same place. That wasn't your father, girl—I ought to know your father, as he was my own brother."

A great wave of thankfulness surged over the girl, and the happy tears came as she lay huddled close against her uncle's breast. It was sometime later that she looked up.

"But who do you suppose fired the shot——"

"That's going to be very hard to tell," he assured her.

He added mentally that it would be still harder to tell, unless the police intercepted a man who took the morning boat for South America—where a man who had shot another man through a window could be safe. This man—also with a circle and star on the palm of his hand—traveled in style, financed by the uncle of Dorothea Solinger.

Dorothea's father had turned straight, after killing his man.

Yellow Vengeance

(*Continued from Page 10*)

"She has possessed the Sacred Pearl. She has gazed upon the sacred inscriptions. None among humans can assert her innocence. Unless Guatama Buddha intervenes she shalt die," he answered. He stepped behind their chairs and the imprisoned two felt the cords about their neck drawn a bit tauter.

"Speak now if you choose, condemned ones, appointing a meeting place in the Seventh Spirit Sphere, for never again shall ye meet until your guilt is cleansed by expiation which shall last through a thousand years and one," the soft voice murmured from behind their heads.

CAROLYN'S head dropped forward upon her breast. Bob, helpless and hopeless, awaited the tightening of the strangler's cord.

"Bring now the Sacred Pearl from its hiding place that their last thought shalt be of their guilt," the voice continued.

There followed the clink of glass against glass as the accomplice moved the retort which contained the pearl. Then Bob and Carolyn were startled by a sharp cry of amazement from the man who had been called Hornu. He cried out excitedly in his native tongue. Instantly the other East Indian sprang across the room and Carolyn and Bob, looking up, saw him stare intently at the pearl which showed dimly within the contents of the glass jar in which it had been dropped.

"Guatama Buddha, all praise to thee," cried the men together. Then they fell upon their knees before the jar and bowed their heads to the floor while over and over, in a monotonous intoned chant, they repeated the words: "Guatama Buddha, thou hast spoken. Thy will shalt be done. Guatama Buddha thou has spoken. Thy will shall be done."

Twisting in their chairs Bob and Carolyn were able to see the jar which contained the pearl. As they looked at the reverently kneeling pair seeking an explanation of their suddenly changed demeanor, Carolyn's eyes fell upon the pearl.

It was slowly dissolving into nothingness.

As she watched, its jetty hue changed to pink, to white, to crystal and it vanished.

"The kneeling men after another reverence, glanced at the jar, saw that the jewel had vanished and then, as if by common accord, sprang to their prisoners and unbound them. This done, they again kneeled at the feet of the amazed Bob and Carolyn.

"In thy mercy forgive us the wrong done thee in our ignorance," they pleaded abjectly. "We thought thee guilty. Guatama Buddha himself has declared thee innocent. Know that in the ancient prophecy of the Sacred Pearl it is written that all who possess it in guilt shall die but that if one innocent and pure of evil intent shall possess it, then Guatama Buddha, in token of his innocence, shall, by his own hand, cause the Sacred Pearl to vanish before the eyes of his temple avengers. This has been done but now before our eyes. Guatama Buddha has spoken. For the wrong we have done thee unwittingly kill us if it is thy wish. We art thine to command."

"Go," commanded Bob Hartley thankfully. "We have no other wish."

With another obeisance the two rose to their feet and silently slipped out of the room.

Carolyn threw herself into Bob Hartley's arms and clung to him, sobbing hysterically. A half hour later when she had grown quieter she caught Bob suddenly by the arm.

"But, Bob, dear, what did become of that strange pearl?" she asked curiously. "We both saw it vanish right before our eyes."

Bob smiled.

"Luckily for us both, you happened to drop it into a test tube filled with nitric acid," he explained. "Oxalic acid dissolves pearls within a couple of minutes. That chemical fact saved our lives, Carolyn."

When they turned into Fifth Avenue and hailed a taxi cab Bob tenderly pressed Carolyn's arm. Then a quizzical smile spread across his face.

"After tonight I'll never say that anything can't happen in this little old New York of ours," he said.

"Nor I," Carolyn answered.

Hay Fever, Catarrh, Asthma Instantly Relieved by New Invention

Results Guaranteed—Try This New Method Without Obligation

How the discovery of a famous nose and throat specialist instantly relieves congestion and inflammation of the respiratory passages and removes the cause of the trouble. Can be used everywhere and at all times—at work, at play, at the theatre, at home, asleep in bed. Invisible, convenient and comfortable.

HERE is welcome news for all sufferers from Hay Fever, Summer Colds, Asthma or Catarrh. A remarkable new method has been found that brings instant GUARANTEED relief. No more need you spend money on harmful drugs, narcotics, or patent medicines in a vain effort to find relief. Breathe-O-Tol, the discovery of a famous nose and throat specialist, is not a patent medicine. It is nothing to swallow, nothing to smear inside your nose. It contains no habit-forming drugs or narcotics. It can be used anywhere, and any time during the day or night. It is practically invisible, and so comfortable that you will never realize you are using it, except for the relief you get. Your physician will tell you that Breathe-O-Tol is the most sensible, the safest, and the most efficacious remedy for your trouble.

How Breathe-O-Tol Brings Instant Relief

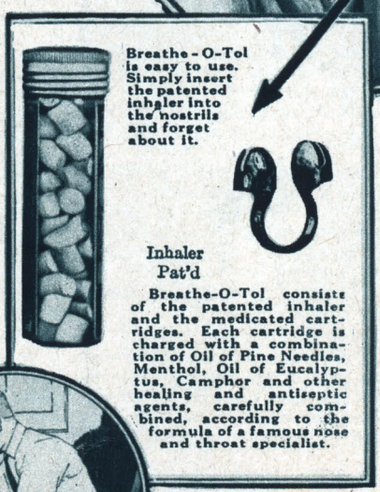
Hay Fever, Catarrh, and other respiratory diseases arise from the presence of germ-bearing spores, especially prevalent during the summer and fall months, which inflame and irritate the delicate membranes of the upper nasal ducts and tracts. The only way to remedy these troubles is to destroy the germs Breathe-O-Tol does this by nature's own principle of inhalation.

Breathe - O - Tol provides pure, medicated air which is inhaled naturally, attacking the disease-bearing spores, relieving congestion of the mucous membrane of the nose, throat and lungs. Swelling is reduced, clogged nostrils opened, breathing made easy and natural. You can enjoy the healing, antiseptic effect of Breathe-O-Tol through the day and night without effort on your part, and without the slightest inconvenience. The patented inhaler is practically invisible, so it can be worn everywhere. It consists of a little silvered device which slips into the nose and holds two medicated cartridges treated with a special combination of oil of pine needles, menthol, oil of eucalyptus, camphor and other scientific healing and antiseptic agents. There is no interference with breathing. The air you inhale is treated by contact with the medicated cartridges so that it immediately clears the head and destroys the germs present in the nose and throat.

The amazing success of Breathe-O-Tol in thousands of cases has made it possible for us to make this unusual offer: If Breathe-O-Tol does not bring you instant relief, it will not cost you a penny.

Hundreds of letters received from sufferers from nose and throat troubles testify to the wonderful relief obtained through Breathe-O-Tol.

But the best proof you can have of Breathe-O-Tol's power to end your own particular trouble is to try it for yourself. You are invited to do this without risking any money. Whether you are suffering from Hay Fever, Rose Fever, Asthma, or from Colds, Catarrh and Bronchitis, you are guaranteed relief or there will be no cost to you for the trial.



Breathe-O-Tol is easy to use. Simply insert the patented inhaler into the nostrils and forget about it.

Inhaler Pat'd

Breathe-O-Tol consists of the patented inhaler and the medicated cartridges. Each cartridge is charged with a combination of Oil of Pine Needles, Menthol, Oil of Eucalyptus, Camphor and other healing and antiseptic agents, carefully combined, according to the formula of a famous nose and throat specialist.

This is a cross-section illustration of the respiratory passages. Diseases such as Hay Fever, Colds, Asthma, Catarrh, Bronchitis, etc., are caused by germs entering these passages. Supplies pure medicated air, which attacks the germs and removes inflammation. Relief is obtained instantly.

SEND NO MONEY

It isn't necessary to send one penny in advance. Merely mail the coupon or write a letter and the patented Breathe-O-Tol outfit, consisting of Inhaler and full supply of medicated cartridges, will be sent to you by return mail. Simply pay the postman $2.00 plus postage when the package arrives. Then try Breathe-O-Tol for five days. If you are not delighted with the relief you receive; if you do not feel confident that it will gradually remove the difficulty entirely, send it back at our expense and your money will be refunded in full immediately. We could not make this offer unless we were absolutely sure that Breathe-O-Tol will do everything we say it will.

Stop suffering. Don't dose yourself with drugs or medicines. Try this new invention that has proven so beneficial in the most severe and long-standing cases.

Remember you take no risk whatever by sending for the Breathe-O-Tol outfit to use for five days. Mail the coupon NOW before you can forget. Be sure to specify whether you want Set A for Colds, Catarrh and Bronchitis or Set B for Hay Fever, Rose Fever and Asthma.

PROOF

Words cannot say enough in praise of your wonderful discovery. I have suffered from Catarrhal headaches for four years. I have spent loads of money on doctors and chiropractors, but nothing gave me relief. Since using BREATHE-O-TOL, I have not had a sign of a headache. Edward J. McCleary, Belmar, N. J.

The set received here today gave my boy, who is a sufferer from Hay Fever, almost instant relief. Clarence F. Norment, *President*, National Bank, Washington, D. C.

Just received Set "A" and tried it out last night for the first time and pleased to state that I am well pleased with results. *Insomnia has been my trouble.* **Robert E. Cleary, Spokane, Wash**

Breathe-O-Tol is a magic worker for Hay Fever. It brought me instant and continuous relief throughout the day, and permitted me to enjoy a perfect night's rest. I highly recommend it. J. Lewis, New York City.

The Breathe-O-Tol Laboratories

D C-2311, 1400 Broadway, New York City

The Breathe-O-Tol Laboratories
D C-2311 1400 Broadway, New York City

Please send me patented Breathe-O-Tol treatment as follows:

( ) Set A for Colds, Catarrh and Bronchitis.
( ) Set B for Hay Fever, Rose Fever, and Asthma.

I will pay the postman $2.00 plus postage on arrival, and will try it faithfully for five days. If I am dissatisfied in any way, I will return the outfit to you and you are to refund my money in full at once.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Orders from Canada and Foreign Countries must be accompanied with money orders.